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Sin as a Problem of Twentieth Century Systematic Theology

Sally Elizabeth Alsford

ABSTRACT

The argument of my thesis concerns the understanding of the doctrine of sin in systematic theology, and, as a corollary of this, the scope of the doctrine in terms of its content. My argument is that the doctrine of sin is particularly prone to being defined with a strictness or narrowness which causes it to lose much of its meaning; that such limiting treatment tends to be accompanied by distorted relationships with, or over-determination by, other key doctrines, particularly that of salvation; and that it is helpful to see this tendency as a failure to see sin as a symbol with a complex of meanings, this complex being essential to the doctrine.

A brief introductory survey of the usual perspectives on sin and of recent monographs firstly indicates the major issues raised by sin. Then more detailed analysis of the work of Barth, Brunner, Rahner, Pannenberg and Ricoeur provides examples of different methods of dealing with sin and leads to the conclusion that the tension between freedom and inevitability is essential to the doctrine of sin: it is part of sin's meaning and attempts to suppress, explain or relocate it lead to unacceptable tensions elsewhere. The use of Ricoeur's analysis of the symbolism of evil as a critical tool demonstrates the significance of the Adamic narrative for Christian doctrine, and the way in which its neglect can lead to the acquisition of ideas characteristic of non-Christian mythologies. The positive suggestion of the thesis is that sin should be seen as a tensive symbol incorporating a wide complex of meanings and involving a specific mythology of "the beginning" and that its paradoxical nature should be maintained as indicating a conflict within humanity, and seen in relationship to the suffering of God in Christ.

Sin as a Problem of Twentieth Century Systematic  
Theology

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PhD

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1987

"Nothing, to be sure, is more of a shock to us than such a doctrine, and yet, without this mystery, which is the most incomprehensible of all we should be incomprehensible to ourselves. The knot of our condition takes its twists and turns in this abyss, so that man is more inconceivable without the mystery than this mystery is inconceivable to man."  
Pascal, Pensées 434.

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For Michael

And with thanks to

Prof. S.W. Sykes.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

BQ	Basic Questions, Pannenberg.
CD	Church Dogmatics, Barth.
CI	The Conflict of Interpretations, Ricoeur.
CL	The Christian Life, Barth.
Dg	Dogmatics, Brunner.
DHE	The Divine and Human Encounter, Brunner.
DI	The Divine Imperative, Brunner.
DO	Dogmatics in Outline, Barth.
3EC	The Third European Conference on Philosophy of Religion, 2nd-5th September, 1982, Mulheim, West Germany. "Philosophical Problems of the Concept of Sin."
Ev.T.	Evangelical Theology, Barth.
FCF	Foundations of the Christian Faith, Rahner.
FM	Fallible Man, Ricoeur.
FN	Freedom and Nature, Ricoeur.
GM	Jesus- God and Man, Pannenberg.
HG	The Humanity of God, Barth.
M	The Mediator, Brunner.
MR	Man in Revolt, Brunner.
N & D	The Nature and Destiny of Man, Reinhold Niebuhr.
SE	The Symbolism of Evil, Ricoeur.
SM	Sacramentum Mundi, Rahner.
TI	Theological Investigations, Rahner.
TKG	Theology and the Kingdom of God, Pannenberg.
TA	Theological Anthropology, Pannenberg.

NB. Full bibliographical details will be given in the footnotes only when the work cited is not listed in the bibliography.

## CHAPTER ONE.

### METHODOLOGY.

#### 1. Argument

The argument of this thesis relates to the methods by which a doctrine of sin is constructed in a range of modern systematic theologies, and, as a corollary of these methods, the scope which such a doctrine is permitted to have. Sin is a doctrine which has always raised questions about crucial areas of Christian theology and thus has a vital role to play within such a theology. Sin also is a doctrine which has always involved tension and paradox corresponding to the tension and paradox inherent in the human being: as finite and self-transcending, as experiencing evil beyond control and yet as experiencing also personal guilt. My argument is that the doctrine of sin is particularly prone to be defined with a strictness or narrowness which causes it to lose much of its essential meaning; that such limiting treatment tends to be accompanied by distorted relationships between the doctrine of sin and other key doctrines, particularly that of salvation; and that it may be helpful to see this tendency as a failure to treat sin as a symbol with a complex of meanings, expressed partly in its mythology - this complex of meanings being essential to the doctrine.

Limiting treatments of sin involve narrowness of content

about which various writers have been concerned (1): limitation to individual rather than corporate, active rather than passive, the broader categorisation of sin as negative rather than positive, action rather than essence. It involves the antagonism rather than the synthesis of Protestant and Catholic, Christian and classical views of humanity and sin(2), and the resolution into one or other pole of the paradox between freedom and necessity, a paradox which is recognised by a fairly wide range of scholars as being essential, in some form, to the doctrine of sin(3). However, on a more fundamental level than this, sin's "sphere of operations" within theology may also be limited. Sin is, in the most basic terms, a discontinuity of some kind between humanity and God. This discontinuity may be in the areas of knowledge, morality, experience, being or relationship. If it is assumed a priori that there is epistemological continuity between human beings and God - that the human being has an innate or natural knowledge of God - then the effect of sin upon knowledge or rationality will be limited, and similarly with other areas. In more practical terms, if it is assumed that the human being's agency through reason is the key factor in his or her recognition of revelation then the effect of sin on rationality is likely to be limited. Again, if sin is assumed always, of necessity, to involve personal individual guilt then sinfulness cannot be antecedent to action, or truly "shared".

My concern with the limitations of treatments of sin in such ways as those outlined above is based on an understanding of sin as having a breadth corresponding to the breadth of human beings and their situations, just as salvation does, and as involving essentially the basic paradox of inevitability or antecedence and human responsibility and agency. Such an understanding seems to me to be necessary for a balanced and symmetrical relationship between the doctrines of sin and salvation and to be true to the way people experience themselves. Suppression or "ironing out" of the paradoxical elements in the doctrine seems to result in their emergence elsewhere in a systematic theology, in the doctrine of God or of creation, for example. However, my aim is not just to criticise current doctrines of sin but to understand why this occurs and what effect it has on theology: how the doctrine of sin "works". Thus my argument is also that a view of sin as a symbol, using Paul Ricoeur's exposition, involving a tensive complex of meanings which are expressed partially in the mythology of "the beginning", helps us to understand the systematic functioning and the problems of sin.

## 2. Method

My method is an important part of my thesis and not merely the "scaffolding" upon which I build my argument. In terms of its method, this thesis is both an exploration of the doctrine of sin in this century and a systematic experiment in the critical use of Ricoeur's work and of my own argument as outlined above.

My aim here is to understand the "shape" of the doctrine: its key issues and problems, its systematic relationships within and implications for Christian theology, the issues which impinge upon it and are determinative for it and the particular significance of twentieth century views. One fundamental constraint, however, imposed itself at an early stage in the investigation, when a decision was taken not to give extended treatment to the relationship between the Christian doctrine of sin and the developing understanding of humanity in the social sciences. From the middle of the nineteenth century it became apparent that Christian theologians and thinkers could not avoid taking some kind of account of evolutionary theory and its implications for the Christian doctrines of creation and the fall. Of the results of this confrontation we will see some evidence in Appendix A. There has been less explicit consideration given to social anthropology, sociology and psychology although these disciplines have significant and controversial things to say about human nature as physical and biological and yet as also "spiritual" or "transcendent" in some way, about the human being's experiences of guilt and shame and the way such experiences are coped with, as for example in mythology and symbolism. Pannenberg is, on the whole, an exception in exhibiting a seriousness about alternative modes of understanding of humanity in the human sciences, and we will outline his approach in Chapter Four. There is also a specialist literature consisting for the most part of articles written about sin from a medical and psychological perspective

(cf. Appendix A). That the systematic theologies treated in this thesis have been extensively influenced by developments in the social sciences is beyond doubt. But so complex is the internal history of the various disciplines and sub-disciplines, and so ambiguous are their relationships with theology that it appeared to be the task of a different investigation specifically oriented in that direction. That is not to say that the present thesis is written on the assumption that systematic or dogmatic theology is a self-contained enterprise. On the contrary, it will emerge at various points in the analysis that a complementary investigation is required for a more complete picture to emerge. The consciously adopted de-limitation of this present work is not such, however, as to prejudge the outcome of such a further study.

It seems helpful to understand the doctrine in terms of questions and answers, considering the questions raised by sin and the types and sources of answers given in the Christian tradition and in contemporary theology. So, for example, the overlapping problems raised by sin throughout the early centuries and through to the reformation were: What is God's relationship to sin? Does he allow or ordain it? What is the level of human responsibility for and involvement in sin? Is it a power or a decision, is the human being active or passive? Is sin something positive or negative, something humanity has or something it lacks, a power or a vitiation? What is the real



nature of sin? Pride or concupiscence, dominance of the fleshly, earthly, animal? A state or an act? How and why did sin come into existence? How is it to be dealt with, from God's point of view and from the human point of view? Do human beings sin? Why? What about babies? Some of these issues were historically important for apologetic reasons in view of the challenge of Manicheism and Marcionism, and their range indicates the significance of the doctrine within the various disciplines - differentiated in our own century - of anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics and systematic theology. They thus highlight the interdisciplinary as well as the systematic relationships and implications of the doctrine. Part of my analysis will be concerned with seeing whether or not the questions which sin raises have changed significantly in our century and whether or not the answers and their sources have changed. I will myself be asking whether there are any recognisable trends, what the task of the twentieth century systematician is with respect to sin, and whether theology has come up with anything new in its re-formulation of the problem.

As I have indicated my methodological tools include my own argument about sin: i.e. I will be examining various doctrines of sin in terms of their breadth and their relationships to the doctrine of salvation and to human beings' experience of themselves in this century. This need not be a circular process, but is presented in the form of a systematic experiment

or a working hypothesis. This hypothesis may in the end fail either as a critical tool or as a structural principle for the doctrine's further development, but if this is the case, the experiment should still be instructive and of constructive use, as with scientific experimental method. My analysis is also based on Paul Ricoeur's analysis of the symbolism of evil.(4) The following outline of Ricoeur's thought will be more fully explored in Chapter Five, and my use of it will be justified or shown to be inadequate as the thesis proceeds. One of the crucial problems of sin which I have noted already is the tension between responsibility and inevitability. Ricoeur maintains that this tension - the tension of the "enslaved will" - is essential to the idea of sin. This is both the conclusion to his analysis of the symbolism of evil and part of his hermeneutical decision to treat the ethical vision of humanity and the Genesis myth, according to which fallibility is not equivalent to fault, as his centre of perspective. With regard to the former, Ricoeur's analysis concentrates largely on the various myths of "the beginning". He isolates four types, the theogonic or "chaos" myth, in which creation, as the overcoming of chaos, is salvation; the tragic, where fault and existence, the divine and the diabolical, are not ultimately distinguished; the orphic, for which physical and finite existence is the punishment of exile; and finally the Adamic myth, the "anthropological myth par excellence".

With regard to his hermeneutical stance, Ricoeur isolates the Adamic myth as the Christian myth of the beginning and as therefore iconoclastic towards the alternative myths in important - although not in all - respects.(5) If this is so then Ricoeur has provided a fascinating analytic tool, especially in view of the predominant ambivalence about the significance of Genesis in formulations of the doctrines of humanity and sin. It may well be the case, for example, that in the absence of a doctrine of creation based in some way on Genesis, an alternative doctrine is assumed implicitly or explicitly which has more in common with one of the "non-Christian" myths than with the Adamic. Such an analysis might thus throw doubt on the thoroughly Christian nature of such a theology and of such a doctrine of sin.

Arising out of this use of Ricoeur is the consideration of language. An examination of the way a particular theology treats the word sin will bring together Ricoeur's ideas and my own argument about the scope of sin. Subsumed under this examination is the problem of distinguishing between sin and original sin and between sin and evil. Beyond the fact that theology tends to talk about sin and original sin, and philosophy about evil, my selection of material does not distinguish between sin and original sin. The selection depends rather on the relevance of the material to the kinds of questions sin raises. I will consider in Chapter Six the

argument that sin should be seen as a sub-category of evil(6), which will also be addressed by the practical use of my understanding in the course of the thesis. It would not be appropriate to attempt to "define" sin and thus to discuss its relationship to evil at this point, because my understanding of this question will develop with and be dependent on the thesis as it proceeds. This issue is thus deferred until the final chapter (pp.305f) when it can be considered in the light of the analysis and conclusions of the intervening chapters. I will look at my selection of material per se in the final section outlining the chapters.

### 3. Presuppositions

I have already indicated the critical use of my own argument and that of Ricoeur. However the presuppositions behind my critique obviously extend beyond this use and should be outlined at this point. I say obviously on the basis of two theses. The first is Polanyi's thesis of tacit knowledge, which leads him to assert that the act of knowledge is unavoidably personal:

...when we accept a discovery as true we commit ourselves to a belief in all those as yet undisclosed, perhaps as yet unthinkable consequences...  
 ...We indwell the external particulars and comprehend the mind which itself dwells in the particulars. Both the indwelling and the comprehension are tacit, creative acts of the knower.(7).

In the second place, I take as axiomatic Barth's theological assertion that theological existence should be determined by the concrete involvement of the theologian. Barth is concerned, according to his exposition in Evangelical Theology. An

Introduction, that theology should be presented as an element of real life. He observes:

In spite of all our warnings it might still seem to be an abstract scheme or an hypostasis. It might even seem like one of the nameless virgins found on the facades of many medieval churches: whether clever or foolish they are all the same made of stone. This impression must not go unchallenged. Evangelical theology is always a history; it takes place in flesh and blood, within the theologian in the narrower and broader sense of the term...(8)

Having acknowledged that I have presuppositions which function in my critical analysis, this is not the place for any defence or discussion of these presuppositions as such, despite the importance of such debate. Again, this would be a different thesis. However, recognising that such presuppositions cannot be assumed as inviolable or as a priori true, they must function in this thesis, as elsewhere, as a working hypothesis, an experimental framework - the basis of the systematic experiment I have outlined above (p.9f).

My working hypothesis is this: that Scripture can be taken, in some sense, as a whole, that - specifically in relation to humanity and sin - it presents a picture coherent and cohesive enough to be the basis of and norm for Christian theology. This is a hermeneutical decision to treat Scripture as the inspired word of God and as such as capable of coherent explanation; it is the kind of hermeneutic decision which Charles Wood discusses.(9) It involves a view, similar to that of Wood, of the canonical function and status of Scripture, affirmed as the

canon of Christian understanding, as its source, record and judge. This is also similar to Brevard Childs' understanding of the canonicity of the Old Testament:

The heart of the canonical process lay in transmitting and ordering the authoritative tradition in a form which was compatible to function as Scripture for a generation which had not participated in the original events of revelation. The ordering of the word for this new function involved a profoundly hermeneutical activity, the effects of which are now built into the structure of the canonical text. For this reason an adequate interpretation of the biblical text, both in terms of history and theology, depends on taking the canonical shape with great seriousness.(10)

The picture derived from such a "canonical" understanding of Scripture requires hard and detailed work in the areas of biblical criticism and exegesis but the broad outlines of the picture are as follows. First, sin is seen as an important and serious problem and obstacle, in relation to both God and humanity. This seriousness is treated not in its own right but in a relation of symmetry to God's purpose of salvation in Christ, a symmetry which is necessary for a correct understanding of both. Second, sin in Scripture is operative in all the various spheres of human beings' behaviour with regard to society and to God, their relationships with community and with God, their attitudes and knowledge, their situation in and relationship to the natural and physical world. It is also operative on the level of human nature as determined in various ways, as well as on the level of human nature as

self-determining. Third, the picture of sin relates essentially to the way human beings actually are and experience themselves to be. I would therefore expect a "Christian" or "Scriptural" doctrine of sin to be meaningful and, to some extent, verifiable in terms of the experience of twentieth-century men and women. As Ricoeur puts it, referring to his idea of sin:

In fact, the symbol used as a means of detecting and deciphering human reality, will have been verified by its power to raise up, to illuminate, to give order to that region of human experience...(11).

The designation of these presuppositions as a "working hypothesis" indicates that their truth is not assumed a priori. Their claim to truth is itself implicitly part of the thesis and they are open to criticism in terms of their usefulness and coherence as analytical and critical tools and as structural bases. In both cases they will be open to criticism on their own terms, that is in their relationship to the doctrine of salvation and the seriousness with which sin is taken in that relation as well as in their relevance to men and women's experience.

It is also important to note here that although these broad outlines are assumed from the outset, my method will be to try and understand the doctrine of sin and the problems associated with it by seeing how the doctrine functions in the context of a

systematic theology, resisting the impulse to "define" sin in terms of its specific meaning and allowing the significance and "shape" of the doctrine to emerge from an analysis of its interrelationships with other doctrines.

#### 4. Outline of Chapters

Chapter Two, "The State of the Question", serves as an introduction to the doctrine of sin and to the nature of my interest in it. The purpose of this chapter is to acquire a preliminary sense of the more influential and persistent ideas about sin in the Christian tradition, the issues and motivations involved in their development and expressed in their various forms, the process and the significance of the development of various doctrines of sin.

This will be done, by outlining the classical perspectives on sin, as represented by the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, by the reformers, particularly Calvin and the Catholic formulations of Trent, and by Schleiermacher. This background is indispensable for the later discussion of twentieth century theology because it sets the agenda for contemporary discussion of sin. There has been considerable discussion since Schleiermacher in the form of monographs. This monograph tradition tends to look at sin from very specific perspectives (for example, sin and evolution, sin and psychology) rather than seeing the doctrine in a broad theological perspective, and it



is too diverse to be included in the thesis. It is, however, significant, indicating as it does the persistence of the problems of sin and the importance of approaching these problems from a contemporary perspective, and contributing different ideas both as to the nature of the problems and to possible solutions. This material is indicated in Appendix A.

After this introductory and necessarily cursory chapter, which will begin to indicate the parameters of the discussion, I will analyse the work of five major thinkers over the next three chapters. Again I begin with a disclaimer about my purpose. Obviously no treatment of any one of these five men in the space of 100,000 words would be adequate as an exposition of their thought. However what is at issue here is not the theology of Karl Barth or Karl Rahner, or even their doctrines of sin, per se, which would also call for a far lengthier discussion. It is, rather, different ways of dealing with sin which are at issue. I am concerned with the shape the doctrine takes in view of differing motivations and methodologies: with the questions which sin raises and the way in which they are answered in the light of various presuppositions and understandings of theology as a whole; with the way the doctrine relates to the understandings of the relationship between finite and infinite. The focus of my attention is on the way in which the system "works", rather than on what the system is in itself. The five thinkers I will be examining are test cases or examples. My

method here is like that of David Kelsey, in The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology, in that the chosen theologians represent significantly different ways of understanding sin: "What is important is the options they illuminate not the theologies they represent." (12)

The focus of this thesis is, accordingly, upon the way sin functions in a specific writer's thought and on its systematic interrelationships, rather than on a doctrine in isolation. I start with two writers of dogmatics, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, and look at how the doctrine of sin is worked out in such a context. Apart from their significance here as dogmatic theologians, they are also significant in representing a theological reaction against the supposed optimism of liberalism.(13) Within this framework there are conflicts between them in the area of anthropology, so that they represent significantly different responses, from a dogmatic and "neo-orthodox" standpoint, to optimism about humanity.

My fourth chapter is devoted to the thought of Karl Rahner and Wolfhart Pannenberg. These two might seem to be rather unlikely companions. They are, however, both representatives of a more metaphysical concern with theology, as well as of two very different reactions to neo-orthodoxy, particularly that of Barth, and to subjectivity in theology. Rahner reacts by

further subjectivism and Pannenberg by turning to history. Here we have two different responses, from a metaphysical standpoint, to neo-orthodoxy; and it emerges, as part of that response, that the need for the apologetic application of theology is recognised, so that anthropology is vitally important for both Rahner and Pannenberg. In particular both are concerned about the human being as the knowing subject.

My fifth chapter examines Paul Ricoeur's ideas about sin (ideas which have already been used as a critical tool in chapters three and four) and considers the potential of these ideas for contributing to our systematic understanding of sin. Ricoeur's work on sin arises from his existential concern with human being and experience and with language as the expression of this being(14). Sin is of particular interest to Ricoeur, as a philosopher, as an example of the process of symbolisation by which human experience is expressed and explored - as a hermeneutic and linguistic test-case - and as a vital factor to be taken into account in any philosophical account of human being and knowledge - it is also an existential issue. This chapter will briefly consider Norman Perrin's work on the kingdom of God as a theological application of Ricoeur's ideas and it will draw together the results of my use of Ricoeur in chapters three and four.

In the use of Barth and Brunner, Rahner and Pannenberg I will compare the different theologies to some extent, and one particular point of comparison will be to see where the discontinuity which sin involves is located, externally to human beings or within them. The differences in the section headings under which this material is presented are a result of different emphases in the material itself and are thus indicative of the particular concerns of the theologians in question.

This typology of dogmatic, metaphysical and existential thought is intended as a broad categorisation, not a strict system of labels, and it arises specifically from the doctrine of sin. Obviously there may be ways in which the categories overlap and the theologians fit into different categories in different respects. What I have in mind particularly is the view of the task and method of theology, and as part of that, the place given to anthropology. So for Barth and Brunner, theology is the systematisation and proclamation or exposition of revelation in Scripture and in Christ, and anthropology is a doctrine among and defined in relationship to other doctrines. For Rahner and Pannenberg anthropology is crucial to the theological task, which has to do with the very process of knowledge. For Ricoeur theology has to do with human beings' experience of themselves - anthropology must be central - and it has to do with the interpretation of symbols, the explication of the meaning of revelation.

These studies are neither exhaustive with respect to the theologies concerned, nor to all the possible doctrines of sin. However, they will, it is hoped, give us an understanding of the shape of the doctrine and "how it works", as well as demonstrating something of how Ricoeur's innovative treatment of the symbolism of evil might be useful as a critical tool in a systematic context. Chapter Six will take the thesis beyond this to some extent, considering a further range of theologians who have written specifically on sin and have tried to find a new way of answering old questions. It will make some suggestions about the results of this exploration for constructive theology.

# CHAPTER ONE FOOTNOTES

1. For examples of such specific concerns see Herbert Morris, "Shared Guilt"; Kevin O'Shea, "The Reality of Sin: A Theological and Pastoral Critique"; Judith Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace; Roger Trigg, "Sin and Guilt as Fate of Freedom"; Ulf Gormann, "Original Sin and Responsibility"; Karl Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin?; Mary Thelen, Man as Sinner.  
On sin as negative or positive, action or essence, see John Macquarrie, In Search of Humanity; Urban Forell, "The Concept of Sin from a Logical Point of View"; Mary Midgley, Wickedness; Seward Hiltner, "Christian Understanding of Sin in the Light of Medicine and Psychiatry"; Lewis Sherrill, "The Sense of Sin in Present Day Experience."
2. For examples of these, see Otto Piper, "Sin and Guilt in Dogmatic Theology", in Twentieth Century Theology in the Making, ed. J.Pelikan; Seward Hiltner, op.cit.; Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man.
3. Such scholars include Reinhold Niebuhr, Urban Forell, Paul Ricoeur, N.P.Williams, Julius Müller, Emil Brunner, Piet Schoonenberg, R.R.Williams, G.Daly, H.J.Adriaanse, W.W.Berry.
4. The Symbolism of Evil, hereafter cited SE.
5. Ricoeur notes the persistence of the tragic view of evil in Christian theology and tradition, and its incorporation into the Adamic myth in the form of the serpent. SE. p.258ff.
6. R.R.Williams, "Sin and Evil", in Christian Theology. ed. Hodgson and King.
7. The Tacit Dimension p.23ff. Quoted R.T.Osborn, SJT 28.
8. Evangelical Theology. An Introduction, p.55ff.
9. Charles Wood, The Formation of Christian Understanding, p.61ff, 81ff.
10. Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, p.60.
11. Paul Ricoeur, S.E. p.355f.
12. David Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology.

13. Cf. Chapter 2, p.52f.
14. Don Idhe notes that Ricoeur's method is not existential, although his theme is. Hermeneutic Phenomenology, p.83.

## CHAPTER TWO.

### THE STATE OF THE QUESTION.

In this chapter we will consider the interpretation of sin within the Christian tradition, in order to gain an overview of the way the doctrine has been seen, its significance within Christian theology, and the problems with which it is associated. We will be concerned with the concrete terms in which sin has been defined and with the "shape" of the doctrine. By "shape" I mean the ramifications of sin: systematic interrelationships between sin and other Christian doctrines, the questions which sin is seen to raise and to answer and the main determinants in the definition and development of the doctrine. Such a general review will obviously be far from exhaustive and will indicate more lines of thought than can be pursued in a single thesis. But my specific aim is to gain an idea of the shape of the problem and thus to make a preliminary survey of some of the options. This will be achieved by outlining the classic perspectives on sin, introducing thereby a few individuals who have had a decisive influence on Christian understandings of sin.

By way of introduction to this survey it is worth noting that doctrines of sin are almost universally seen as a problem. There is a turbulent history of "strenuous, emotional debate" which has been "continually waged throughout the entire history



of the Church and her theology".(1) The consensus is not only that the doctrine is problematic but also, at least implicitly, that the doctrine is important and the problems therefore genuine and significant. There is a wide contemporary concern about sin representing, moreover, a range of very different standpoints. The fall and redemption have been described as the two pillars of the Christian faith, an attribution of great significance.(2) Kierkegaard referred to sin as a dogmatic problem, but one that cannot be explained by dogmatics(3) and Berkouwer describes it as a "peculiar" problem.(4) J.Orr, from a very conservative perspective maintained that sin is seriously changed, weakened and sometimes almost obliterated because of a general departure from the principles of divine holiness and moral law(5), and E.Charbonnier also talks of an eclipse of the biblical understanding of sin because of the intrusion into Christian thought of pagan concepts of God.(6)

Contemporary Catholicism sees sin as a problem requiring new interpretation and this debate is evidenced by a number of articles such as those of J.W.Glazer and K.F.O'Shea(7), the former being motivated by pastoral interests and the latter taking into account modern psychology. There is a particular concern about the communitarian nature of sin, which represents an important shift in contemporary Catholicism.(8)

As an example of a psychological and medical perspective Karl Menninger asks Whatever Became of Sin? He analyses and opposes the "disappearance" of sin and the corresponding re-allocation of responsibility.(9) Seward Hiltner, from a similar medical and psychological standpoint, maintains that insights from medicine, including psychiatry, can help to counter distortion of the Christian doctrine of sin.(10)

These references indicate some of the wide contemporary interest in sin, which is recognised as a problem within different areas of Christian thought. Having noted this concern we will go on to examine the way in which sin has been, defined in various traditional perspectives. Here we propose to include the following: the perspectives of A. the Augustine- Pelagius debate, B. Augustinian and reformation pessimism, seen here in Calvin and Calvinism, C. the traditional Catholic and Protestant views, D. liberal optimism and the turn to the subject seen in Schleiermacher. These perspectives will introduce other issues which are crucial in contemporary analysis - the understanding of sin as privative or negative, and the Christological understanding of sin - as well as the issues which are more obviously central such as free will and determinism.

#### The classical perspectives on sin.

##### A. Augustine Versus Pelagius

The conflict between Augustine and Pelagius is well known in general terms at least, as one of the most significant, bitter and persistent debates in Christian theology, and Augustine's doctrine has had undeniable influence through the centuries, both as type and as anti-type. In apologetic terms, Augustine's doctrine was developed through the various conflicts of his life including that with Pelagius. Against the Manichees he was concerned to deny evil a substantial, independent existence; against the Donatists, to stress its universality and persistence; finally, against Pelagius, to assert its universal and enslaving nature and power. However it is also important to see the doctrine of sin in the context of Augustine's total system. Indeed, this approach will be consistent with Augustine's own platonic understanding of the importance of the harmony of the universals, rather than the particulars, which appears in Christian terms as the idea of "nature" - the harmonious unity of creation and God's will.(11).

Augustine's doctrine of God strongly reflects the influence of both his platonic and his anti-Manichean thought. God is the supreme and ultimate good and "Being", "yea, the height of substance and only true substance of the reasonable creature."(12) In fact, these two are synonymous because being, existence, is good per se. This means that creation is good not only because of its origin in God's will but because it exists and thus partakes of God's being. God's nature and will and

Nature itself represent one continuous state of affairs, unified and harmonious. Into this everything must be fitted coherently - no dualism is possible. However Augustine does not carry this through in seeing nature as an emanation of God, but distinguishes sharply between God and humanity. The basis of this distinction is that humanity was created not out of God's own substance but ex nihilo. This provided Augustine with his defence against any ascription of evil to God.(13) It follows on from this that if existence is good, non-existence, or rather defection from the good, is evil. Pelagius' conviction is ironically also basically the same: the essential goodness of God, and so of his creation. For Pelagius however this essential goodness extends to humanity, which is affected and infected by sin, but is not fallen, as for Augustine. Pelagius also declared that sin is negative, a privation or lack, not an entity. Whereas in Augustine this leads to ambiguity over the reality of sin (see below) for Pelagius it leads to a more straightforward denial of the corruption of human nature. The goodness of God's being and creation, along with the appeal to his omnipotence and his good, if sometimes mysterious, purposes is the closest Augustine comes to explaining why the fall occurred. Although he is not particularly concerned with such an explanation for its own sake, the idea is very important as the ultimate origin of evil. Because humanity was created ex nihilo, it will inevitably tend not only to mutability and corruptibility but to defection from being back to nihil. Augustine depends so heavily on this basic idea that Lacey has

been led to suggest that he verges on treating nihil as a real state of existence.(14) However Augustine does explain that something as insubstantial as a defection can have substantial effects, like not eating(15).

The other doctrine which has a key place in Augustine's thought and in the debate with Pelagius is that of free-will. Will is one of the terms which Augustine uses in a very particular way and it is also related to goodness. Will is a vital part of human nature and even whilst being at his most emphatic about grace during the controversy with Pelagius Augustine insisted on the place of human will.(16) However what he means by will is a dynamic conception related specifically both to action, and to God's will. It is willingness or unwillingness to do something and is related to a human being's prior disposition - it is good or bad rather than neutral. So while Augustine insists repeatedly that will is freedom from compulsion or force, it is determined by the strongest motive and is limited by the options available. This in turn leads to a very significant view of freedom, which is, for Augustine, not equilibrium or choice but possession of a motive or value strong enough to determine inherent human instability. So through the fall human freedom was not lost, but changed. While Adam's freedom was the freedom to accept or not accept God's grace in order to be good, his choice to abandon this gift and defect from the good is inherited by all humanity.(17) For Augustine

although this is loss of choice, it is not loss of "free will". Indeed, the sense of choice is itself a symptom of the distintegration of the human will. In his final and glorious state the redeemed human being will be involved with the object of his or her choice, i.e. God, in such a way that no other choice is conceivable, and incapacity for sin will be the natural state.(18) This, for Augustine, is real freedom. So the freedom of will which humanity now possesses is freedom from righteousness and the determination which will always has is evil. (19) Augustine therefore has no need to try and avoid saying that humanity is in a situation of necessity (20) because for him this is not a violation of free will or humanity. He amplifies this at times by talking about the delight human beings take in sinning which is evidence of their willingness, but with or without such willingness, prior to God's grace, the human being is subjected to the necessity of concupiscence, of which more shortly.

Pelagius' view of freedom is diametrically opposed to that of Augustine, and this is at the root of the difference between them. For Pelagius, to say that a human being is a sinner presupposes responsibility, and responsibility, in turn, presupposes freedom. Freedom, for Pelagius, means equilibrium and the ability to choose. Human nature is essentially unimpaired, and all sin is thus deliberate. So Pelagius obviously rejects Augustine's doctrine of original sin and even

more emphatically that of original guilt - a contradiction in terms for Pelagius. His motivation in this instance, in his insistence on responsibility and freedom of will, was a concern with practical Christianity, with the necessity for human beings to "work out their own salvation". He acknowledged that human nature including the power to do good, was of course a gift of God, but he insisted that the will to do good and the attainment of good are both under human control. Pelagius admitted some determination of situation of the human race, through example and habit. This could be interpreted as coming close to a social interpretation of original sin, but Pelagius consistently insisted on sin as a voluntary and individual determination of the will. The reign of sin in the world makes it difficult for human beings to live without sin, and it is unlikely that even the converted will succeed in doing so, but Pelagius insisted on the possibility, demonstrated in the Old Testament, of living sinlessly. Pelagius could not really explain why human beings always sin, or how sin came to "reign" in the world if human beings have free will, nor could he explain the power of instinct, desire and circumstances to influence actions and choices in a way which throws doubt on such a declaration of indeterminacy. N.P. Williams points out that Pelagius' indeterministic anthropology necessitates a purely exemplarist soteriology, which cannot be admitted as true to Scripture or to Christian tradition. It also, as Williams notes, had the effect of increasing the seriousness of sin in making every fault or failure into a conscious and deliberate act of sin against God.

However, if the debate led Pelagius to the extremes of his view it also led Augustine to the other extreme.

For Augustine, sins of weakness are inevitable because of the persistence and power of concupiscence. Although concupiscence tends to be associated with sexuality - and this is the most notorious aspect of Augustine's thought - in fact it is really human beings' instability and disharmony, chiefly the disorder of their senses in rebellion against their mind and self-control. This state is the "law of sin" - not sin as such. It is a penal state, which means that it can still be seen as part of God's order and harmony, as a manifestation of his justice. Augustine insists that God's justice cannot be understood in terms of human justice(21), it is not an abstract thing but indicates the correct state or relationship of things within the created order, the subjection of things, lower to higher, flesh to spirit, soul to God.(22) This understanding of justice is thus Augustine's explanation for the condemnation of all humanity "in Adam". It is part of the harmonious justice of the universe that punishment, in the form of concupiscence, should be received where it is due. The reason why it is due to all on account of the one man's fault is that Adam's fault is per se the fault of every human. Augustine's reliance on the idea of seminal identity again reflects his concern with the universals rather than particulars: "By the evil will of that one man all sinned in him, since all were that one man, from



whom therefore, they individually derived original sin." Coupled with this explanation is the most important, though not the only, outworking of concupiscence in the form of sexual libido, as the supreme example of human senses overcoming rationality. This idea really backs up that of seminal identity. Human beings cannot escape original sin just because they are human but because their descent from Adam was through carnal generation, prompted always by concupiscence.(23)

This is an area of tension in Augustine's thought. Firstly in his integration of platonic and Christian ideas of God, the biblical ideas of God's love and mercy rather lose out in the face of his justice. Secondly his explanation of the relationships between sin, justice, responsibility etc., seem to get tied in knots. He insists that responsibility is necessary for sin to be sin(24), - an early statement, but consistent with later views where he states that actual sin is not a necessary factor in the condemnation of human beings: "He that is begotten is no sinner as yet in act and is still new from his birth; but in guilt he is old."(25) Thus guilt is not dependent on sin but on concupiscence which is only improperly called sin.(26) So Augustine cannot maintain that guilt is necessarily connected with individual responsibility.(27) The only sense in which it is "guilt" is because each human being possesses it (i.e. concupiscence) through carnal generation. However carnal generation itself, as prompted through concupiscence is a penal

state.(28) Augustine is saying that original sin is necessary to make sense of God's punishment, but it is itself a state of punishment. There are two clear reasons, at least, why Augustine continued to maintain such a difficult explanation. His insistence on original sin, firstly, he saw as necessary to explain the need of newly-born infants for baptism, a need he accepted on the Church's authority, and on the basis of his own consciousness of sin as a child, and the observation of sin in babies.(29) This recalls the change in Origen's thought which was at least linked to his confrontation with the practice of paedobaptism. The need for baptism obviously implied the presence of something needing remitting, even though individual, responsible sin was obviously not present. Secondly, the idea of carnal generation is necessary, particularly against the Pelagians, to stress the universality of guilt, and to explain why the children of even regenerate parents are still guilty and in need of baptism. Even though baptism removes the guilt of concupiscence, concupiscence itself is still present, leaving the believer with a constant battle in which he or she never has the victory to the extent of propagating without pleasure. So propagation is always due to the old nature not the new.(30) In interpreting the guilt as itself merited on account of the punishment, Augustine seems to be tracing a circular argument. It is an argument which also leads to a very harsh view of God, which Augustine tries to mitigate in the case of infants, by allowing the "mildest condemnation of all" to infants who die without being baptized.(31) He is concerned to guard against any

suggestion of God being the origin of sin and does so by reference to his view of evil. God is the author of human nature, which is still itself good, but not of the corruption of that nature. At times he refers to the devil as the author of this evil, and also to his understanding of will, maintaining that the evil volition itself is not from God, as a defection, but the ability to perform the evil volition is from God.(32) The above means that his argument does seem to tend towards attributing everything to God - or else towards giving nihil, and its adherents, more reality and force than he really wants to. Ricoeur notes that although Augustine includes the opposition of will and freedom at some level, this opposition is not thematized because this would need the idea of evil as a qualitative leap, a philosophy of action and a philosophy of contingency, and so the movement towards nothingness becomes difficult to distinguish from the total character of creation, and the resulting concept of defectus does not take account of the positive power of evil.(33) So Augustine talks frequently about God's purpose in creation, giving various explanations such as that God gives the ability to sin for human beings' condemnation(34), and prescribes impossible sinlessness in order that he may both justly condemn and rightly cleanse.(35) Creation and the fall are thus reduced to a demonstration of God's justice and mercy, justice being foremost. They are ordained to show what human free will was capable of and to show humanity the goodness of obedience. Above all the whole process of creation, fall and redemption are seen as part of the order

of cause and effect, themselves relationships of ius within the finite order.(36) Ius is basically an expression of God's controlling will. Augustine is not actually saying that God ordained the fall, as Calvin was to do, but that he created human beings with the capability for sin, foreknew the outcome and works it into his good purposes.

Following on from this is the second real tension in Augustine's thought. This is the dichotomy between his deep sense of suffering and sin, their depth and weight even in children - a concern with the subjective side of sin - and his insistence that all this is a part of God's ordered harmony. Ricoeur notes that while the doctrinal stiffness and false logic of Augustine's concept of original sin is attributable to the Pelagian controversy, his profound motivation was his own experience of conversion and the inward struggle of the will.(37) From his own experience and from his philosophy he describes those who need redemption as "...involved in the death, infirmities, servitude, captivity and darkness of sin, under the dominion of the devil, the author of sin", yet he also strangely devalues evil. Burnaby considers that Augustine failed to reach a truly Christian solution of the problem of suffering, and to maintain consistently a theory of the true nature of punishment. This is seen in two ways. Firstly, "natural" evils are seen as part of nature, which is good. It only seems evil because it is discordant to our ears which are

imperfectly tuned to hear. So he says that "...without the justice of God no one is slow in mind or crippled in body."(38) Secondly he can allow no possibility of anything totally evil existing (even Satan) as this would be impossible, evil being a defection from good, nor can he allow cosmic or objective evil because of God's omnipotence and providence. Lacey argues that what he is omitting to account for is that things can change in the course of evil not just from being to non-being, but from one kind of thing to something different.(39) So human sin is described as "... rebellion against our own selves, proceeding from ourselves."(40) Evil and sin are thus subsumed within God's good being, and his good purposes(41), which involve his control of evil as well as of good wills.(42)

The third main tension, implied above, is the question of fate which TeSelle particularly raises (in his conclusion,p.419ff). It cannot be denied that Augustine's teaching sounds fatalistic, especially taking into account his teaching on grace, the final doctrine to tie in. It accords with what has been said already about free will. In the process of redemption the human being is allowed the exercise of free will understood as action motivated by desire. So, once presented with the truth, it is the human being's individual responsibility to accept willingly, once the will has been prepared by God. This is consistent with the rest of Augustine's thought, and leads to a situation in which human

beings can do nothing other than sin because of their sinful conception and solidarity with Adam, and nothing other than believe once acted on to so believe.(43) It may be that Augustine was led to over-emphasise his view on grace in the Pelagian debate, but these views are reiterated in the Retractions, and are in line with his view of choice as part of the human sinful state. As TeSelle notes, Augustine would not accept the charge of fatalism on several counts. He allows a place for free action in Adam, the human state is related to God's justice and grace which leads to true freedom: and God's foreknowledge is not the same thing as his ordination. He also sees the change as really coming in Augustine's views on election, not on free-will or grace, and relates the devaluation of suffering specifically to his later views on predestination.

Assessments of the debate between Augustine and Pelagius obviously vary. However it does seem fairly clear that, as Rondet points out, Augustine was making explicit a tradition which was already slowly coming to the surface. Even N.P.Williams admits some element of truth in this. Rondet is particularly concerned to refute the common Protestant assumption which is axiomatic to Williams that "original sin" is essentially original to Augustine. This assumption is based on Williams' distinction between the dogmatic and the psychological. As a "formal dogmatic scheme" he acknowledges that original sin purports to be based upon scriptural texts

expounded by previous theologians. It is as a "psychological document" that it proclaims itself to be a product of Augustine's own personality and of the unique circumstances of his life. J.P.Burns also claims an element of the radically new in Augustine's anthropology in the fusing of the Christian Platonic and the Ascetic traditions in terms of which he classifies the tradition before Augustine. However, in relation to Burns' own designation of these categories Augustine seems closer to the Platonic than the Ascetic.(44) Despite its problems, Augustine's thought was undeniably vastly influential, and this influence has been evident right up to this century.

#### B. Augustinian and Reformed Pessimism - Calvin and Calvinism.

Although there was an immediate and widespread reaction against Augustine's thought, at least in its most rigid or stringent form, in the work of Anselm and Abelard in particular, Aquinas accepted his anthropology at many points(45), and the reformers relied on Augustine's understanding of humanity to a great extent.(46) The reformation pessimism about humanity was part of the assertion of salvation by faith alone and the denial of salvation by works or by humanity's own efforts, which the Catholic Church was seen to at least allow, if not to teach. In Calvin we find Augustinianism pushed to what Moxon calls its "logical and fatal conclusion" (see Appendix A pp.335f). As for Augustine, for Calvin the doctrines of God and of revelation are of central importance. Knowledge of God and of self are derived from the knowledge of revelation, the motion of knowledge, as

that of grace, being from God down to humanity(47). Calvin is concerned to stress God's omnipotence and sovereignty, his ultimate causality of all things. This causality means that there can be no distinction between God's willing and his permission, or between the divine foreknowledge and ordination.(48) The corollary of the above is that sin, although a given reality, is to be seen from the standpoint of grace. So, as redemption is the total renovation of humanity, so that state from which humanity is redeemed must be total.(49)

Calvin's view of humanity before the fall is close to the Catholic view, as he sees humanity as perfect, from creation, with original righteousness as a supernatural gift in addition to the "natural" endowments. The human being was not originally sinful in any sense, but was given freedom to "incline his will to evil".(50) The fall is therefore crucial for Calvin as the point at which the immediate responsibility for sin devolves onto humanity due to Adam's pride, faithlessness and free choice to rebel.(51) He also maintains the existence of Satan, similarly ascribing his fall to rebellion. However, Calvin has to go further back because of the necessary nature of God's will, which means that the ultimate origin of sin cannot be left with Adam, either by his choice or his constitution. At this more fundamental level Calvin is concerned to assert that Deus non causa peccati emphasized throughout tradition, and in the reformed confessions.(52) He wants to avoid the dualism this



formulation points to however, denying sin a real, independent, substantial existence or an origin outside of God's will. Calvin resolves the conflict in God, rather than in the character of sin itself, asserting God's ordination of the fall and of sin.(53) Schleiermacher picks up the inconsistency of still allowing the possibility of rebellion, and Berkouwer notes that it is "remarkable" that Calvin will speak of "ordinatio" whereas Roman Catholic theology prefers to speak of a "positive permissio."(54) The confessions generally do not go as far as Calvin(55) despite their explicit statements about God's sovereignty and providence. To bring the two together they talk of God making good use of sin and evil, a kind of theodicy to which Calvin comes close to. However, Calvin takes another step further back in explanation, resorting ultimately to the distinction between God's revealed and his hidden will, the "cause" of God's will itself being a mystery.(56) He also asserts that God is not responsible for sin because he is the Creator, and sin is the perversion of creation.(57) This last point is important in Calvin's understanding of sin as "insanity", against reason, disorder, in contrast with the order of God's creation.

Calvin takes up Augustine's understanding of original sin in his view of original sin as itself sin and as punishable, although it is also the "seed" of sin. This means that we are "conceived and born" in sin.(58) Although he also refers to the

idea of wrath as "human affection after the manner of Scripture for the revengement of God", he still maintains the severe reality of that revengement.(59) So for Calvin original sin is a disease, "a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature ... which first makes us liable to God's wrath, then also brings forth in us those works which Scripture calls 'works of the flesh'". He also specifically denies that sin per se arises from habit.(60) At this point, the antithesis of sin is external to the human being, it is the antithesis between fallen humanity, the flesh, and the Holy Spirit. We have no righteousness at all, nor even any ability or potential for righteousness, prior to God's grace. There are "remnants" of God's image, but what is left is itself polluted, part of the flesh, and cannot be counted as righteous.(61) Having said this, Calvin wants to insist that humanity is responsible. Although sin is necessary or inevitable, it is also voluntary. Human beings are free not from necessity, but from compulsion and they are therefore responsible.

Calvin's understanding of the Law is important for his understanding of sin. In Torrance's words, the Law "gives objective depth to (man's) perversity".(62) It is also significant for salvation for, as Christ's death is substitutionary, it is the fulfilment of God's law of judgment. As such it achieves salvation, the state of justification before God as the absolute antithesis to the prior human state of

condemnation before God. Redemption is thus re-creation or re-birth, there is an absolute discontinuity between human beings in their fallen state, where they are no longer recognisable as God's creation, and in their redeemed state.

However, despite the antithetical character of this view of salvation, the believer cannot move from one sphere to the other so long as he or she is in the sinful world, the effects of sin are not so easily dealt with. The world is evil because it is fallen, and the body is the "prison house."<sup>(63)</sup> The process of repentance is thus a process of mortification of the flesh and vivification by the spirit. Human status before God has changed, but the outworking of this is gradual. The flesh-spirit distinction is soteriological, it is the distinction between the sinful nature of humanity and the image of God to which it is being restored in practice, as in reality in Christ it has been restored. The real conflict of sin for Calvin is therefore post- not pre-conversion.<sup>(64)</sup> Repentance is thus necessary throughout the life of the believer: "the whole man is naturally flesh, until by the grace of regeneration, he begins to be spiritual."<sup>(65)</sup>

The reformed perspective seen in Calvin and Calvinism will be particularly relevant to my later analysis of Barth (Chapter 3 pp.79ff) and also for our brief analysis of Schleiermacher

below. In particular, Calvin's description of sin as "insanity" prefigures Barth's idea of sin as the impossible possibility.

### C. The Protestant and Catholic Options.

As we have seen with Calvin, the Protestant "option" involves varying degrees of an Augustinian pessimism about the extent and depth of sin. The depth of depravity was seen as corresponding to the scope of redemption. Karl Aner describes the reformation as the "Restoration of a Religious and Personal Content to the Doctrine of Sin",<sup>(66)</sup> and indeed the reformers were concerned to stress the positive nature of sin in precise and ethical terms. This, combined with the denial of any distinction between human nature and any donum superadditum to be lost at the fall, tended, as in Calvin, to result in the ascription of positive and personal power and guilt to hereditary sin, as the result of the fall and as its punishment. Zwingli was an exception, denying the guilt of original sin because of the denial of individual responsibility which this entailed. Early Protestantism denied the validity of the distinction between the obligation to be perfect and the obligation to try to be, asserting that every human act which does not embody moral perfection is sin, and that human beings can obey God only through his special grace. Their concern was to deny the possibility of any human fulfilment of the law, and this was the basis of their insistence about sin, the state of sin and original sin, the latter being the real battleground.

The Catholic reaction to this teaching and Catholic unease about some of Augustine's teaching came to expression at the Council of Trent, which holds preeminent authority as the orthodox Catholic statement about sin(67), although some expositions refer back to the Council of Carthage which Trent was restating to a great extent. Although Trent has been described as generally semi-Pelagian(68), its first four decrees on sin, originating largely from the anti-Pelagian Council of Carthage, and being directed against the semi- or neo- Pelagian positions of Erasmus (on Romans 5), Pighius and Zwingli, are in fact anti-Pelagian. These decrees insist on the effect of Adam's sin as the source of original sin, its transmission to all by physical propagation, not by imitation, and the necessity, therefore, of baptism for all, including infants. So Jedin states that the final decree of Trent was as far removed from Pelagianism as from Protestantism. It is not therefore sufficient simply to describe the Catholic view as semi-Pelagian, or privative. Sin has a positive element as well as a negative, a turning to something created as well as a turning away from God, the former being emphasised by Thomist thought, the latter by Scotist.(69)

However Trent was also a refutation of Luther's teaching about sin and particularly about justification, the decrees about sin being, to some extent, a preamble for the crucial discussion on justification.(70) It is this element of Trent's

teaching which gives some weight to its designation as semi-Pelagian. In the fifth decree the Council insisted on the removal of original sin and guilt in baptism and that concupiscence, which remains after baptism, is not sin "in the true and proper sense", although it does come from and incline to sin. After baptism the human being is "innocent, unstained, pure and guiltless... so that nothing henceforth holds them back from entering into heaven." (71) This teaching was directed against Luther's view that concupiscence, remaining after baptism, is sinful, although its sin and guilt are not imputed to us because of the imputation, instead, of Christ's righteousness. Trent was to go on, in the decrees on justification, to affirm justification as a real state of holiness, not an imputed status or a "fiction". The original sin which is removed by baptism is the absence of original righteousness and holiness, this deficiency being made up by the grace of justification which is interior and habitual. In this justified state human beings are liable to sin and have no certainty about their predestination to eternal life (this also was directed against the reformer's views on assurance): they must therefore work out their salvation and trust God for the grace of perseverance. Trent's teaching puts an emphasis on human co-operation with grace which Luther and Calvin could not have accepted because of their belief in the persistence, after baptism, of the moral deterioration involved in sin. For Trent the justified human being is really just; the remaining, post-baptismal concupiscence is not sin as such, and so the area

of practical importance becomes that of actual sins.

Lying behind this teaching is the distinction between the human being's essential character, the pura naturalis, and original righteousness, the donum superadditum. It is because the fall involved the loss of original righteousness not the corruption of humanity's essential nature that the remission of sin and justification result in the human being essential goodness. The human being's inclination to virtue may be weakened but the integrity and the essential capacity of the natural human powers are not lost. Humanity can therefore play a significant role in salvation. The adequate fulfilment of the law by human effort (with grace) is possible and the gift of eternal life is reward as well as grace.

This Catholic anthropology is thus basically optimistic, seeing sin chiefly as a privation which leaves humanity with their powers of decision and seeing redemption and justification as enabling real holiness, and at least partial restoration of the individual to the original state of righteousness.(72) Janelle considers this optimism in more detail in his analysis of the Catholic reformation as not only a response to the Protestant reformation and to the need for practical and administrative reforms, but also the expression of a spirit of piety which had been spreading throughout the previous century,

particularly in the forms of mystical writings and the Christian humanism of Erasmus and More. This piety he describes as first and foremost optimistic, with its trust in human nature and the beauty of the human soul, its search for methods to enhance the gradual ascent of the human soul towards union with God, and its stress not on the decayed nature of humanity, but on its bright prospects.

The divergence between the Protestant and Catholic anthropologies can thus be described most simply as that between a pessimistic and an optimistic view of humanity and sin. However, as in any such heated debate, both sides are likely to be pushed to extremes by the very fact of the conflict, as were Augustine and Pelagius. This outline should be seen as a fairly general one, for this reason; also because of the differences which existed in either camp.(73) Melancthon, like Zwingli, tended towards a more privative view of sin and towards a Thomistic understanding of post-baptismal concupiscence as the materia of sin, its guilt being removed. He succeeded in getting a less pessimistic doctrine than that of Luther accepted in the Augsburg Confession. The Arminians reacted more violently to the Protestant teachings on human degradation. Similar differences and reactions existed within the Catholic Church, notably in the Jansenists' argument for a pessimistic, Augustinian anthropology. This outline will serve, however, as a general indication of the dominant emphases of Catholic and



Protestant theology as they emerged from the Reformation period.

D. Liberal Optimism and the turn to the Subject - Schleiermacher.

It is tempting to apply the anachronistic labels "evolutionary" and "existentialist" to Schleiermacher's theological anthropology. He adumbrates ideas which have developed in our century under the influence of evolutionary and existential thought, and has himself been directly influential on Christian theology. His perspective on sin in The Christian Faith is significant because of his role in the growth of liberalism and it is his legacy which is greatly reflected and reacted against in contemporary theology, particularly in that of Barth. (74)

One of Schleiermacher's central ideas, developed in interaction with the philosophical psychology of his day, is that of the religious self-consciousness, the highest level of consciousness, whose content is the feeling of absolute dependence - i.e. awareness of being posited by something other than oneself. This is the true realm of piety, in which Schleiermacher was concerned to identify the essence of Christianity and to use as a hermeneutic for the whole of Christian theology. Piety or God-consciousness is the content of redemption and constitutes humanity's link with God. However we should first note a significant point which has relevance to sin; the realm of God-consciousness is the spirit as opposed to the flesh. This is not, strictly speaking, a classical spirit-flesh dualism, as the flesh has no innate evil power, its

dominance being more a matter of temporal priority, but it is seen as the lower nature, the abode, or realm in some sense, of sin.(75)

A second determinative idea is that of redemption. It is in a sense a false distinction to talk of God-Consciousness, consciousness of sin and of redemption separately, for the three belong very much together. The God-consciousness, itself dependent on Christ as Redeemer to bring it into real existence, involves consciousness of sin. Indeed, Schleiermacher's concern is not so much with the universal God-consciousness but with the Christian redeemed consciousness. Thus the idea of redemption is as central as that of consciousness. Sin, related to redemption, is defined as "that which evokes redemption". It is also with a view to his idea on sin that Schleiermacher considers that the term Redemption may in some cases need redefining.(76) Also, it is only through redemption that the divine attributes can be related to sin(77) - which brings us to the next point. Thirdly, the Christian self-consciousness shapes our idea of God who, strictly speaking, can be posited only as the "Whence" of our feeling of dependence. We cannot really go further than this in our description of God himself: any description of his attributes is really a description of the way our feeling of dependence is related to him. In practice Schleiermacher relates most of the divine attributes to the divine causality, although he does come to say at the end of The

Christian Faith that the essence of God is love and wisdom, derived from our awareness of redemption. This sits rather uncomfortably with his otherwise very Platonic concept of God as the indivisible, impassible unmoved mover - an inconsistency which Richard Niebuhr notes - although this more approachable conception of God brings us closer to Schleiermacher's aim to centre dogmatics and theological discussion once more on true piety. Schleiermacher was also particularly concerned with the relationship between individuality and community, to which I will refer again in Chapter Six (p.303 and note 17).

In a sense, the fact of sin is a given for Schleiermacher as part of the consciousness of God and of redemption - there is a distinction to be noted, however, in that God-consciousness is taken as given, whereas sin is a necessary presupposition of the consciousness of redemption, and so could be said to be derived from it.

It is solely on that inward experience (i.e. the inward and immediate consciousness of universal sinfulness) that our consciousness of the need of redemption depends.(78)

So he denies the possibility of seeing the consciousness of sin as a consciousness of good still lacking in us, on the grounds that this would nullify the reality of sin and the need for a redeemer, and would thereby make it scarcely a Christian view at all.(79) However, this is not to conclude that sin is important to Schleiermacher merely as the prerequisite for redemption (although this is the way it sometimes seems) - but rather to

point out the centrality of redemption.

We should also note, in relation to the fact of sin, that Schleiermacher deals with sin in isolation from other doctrines - e.g., redemption or Christology - as an expedient for the purpose of his exposition, while insisting, as we have noted, that consciousness of sin and of grace always belong together, the one relating to consciousness of alienation from God, the other to communion with God. This recalls the focus of the majority of earlier writers on the centrality of salvation for all theology, including the doctrine of sin. With Schleiermacher, as with other theologians we will consider, this centrality of redemption is narrowed down further to the person of Christ.

There are two implications for Schleiermacher of the fact of the consciousness of sin. Firstly, it implies knowledge of some better state from which sin represents a deviation. Rejecting the idea of deviation from the law, as either being synonymous with deviation from God's will, or smuggling in a non-Christian distinction between God and his law, he says that the knowledge of a better state is original perfection. This original perfection, which exists in us as in Adam before, during and after our (and his) first sin, is our predisposition towards God-consciousness. This includes the consciousness of a

faculty of attaining this consciousness of God (80), and also includes the impulse to express the God-consciousness which is part of the corporate nature of redemption. It is in comparison with this original perfection that we recognise sin as a derangement of our nature. Secondly, in connection with the sin-grace antithesis, the consciousness of sin must always eventually arise out of the "vision of Christ's perfection". Sin and grace are therefore linked as consciousness of sin is the beginning of regeneration, due to Christ's redeeming activity. This second point also relates to the spirit-flesh theme, in that the designation of the activity of the flesh as sin is dependent on the state of the spirit, i.e., sin is seen as such if the God-consciousness is sufficiently developed for there to be a conflict between the two.

Going on from the fact of sin to the nature of sin, original sin is the focal point arising from Schleiermacher's consideration of Protestant Confessional Statements. Schleiermacher rejects the idea of a historical fall as the origin of sin firstly as irrelevant because unverifiable in terms of our self-consciousness, and secondly as irrelevant because it has no effect on our own consciousness of sin and of the need for redemption. Schleiermacher, also rejecting the idea of Satan, finds it inexplicable how the first sin could have happened had some sinfulness - even potential - not existed already. He admits that to allow for the activity of Satan

makes an explanation more possible without such sinfulness, but even so insists that for Satan's suggestions to take effect there must have been some kind of readiness to sin present in the soul. This is because Schleiermacher cannot accept more than a relative freedom for humanity (i.e. relative to the finite world only): more importantly, it would reduce the validity of the consciousness of absolute dependence. This interpretation also has to do with the fact that Schleiermacher will accept no real distinction between potentiality and actuality, such as is used in explanations of the origins of sin in terms of the potentiality inherent in human free will: if human beings had the potential to sin before they first did so, that is, for Schleiermacher, tantamount to saying that they had prior sinfulness. So it is that Schleiermacher explicates the idea of a

.. timeless original sinfulness always and everywhere inhering in human nature and co-existent with the original perfection given along with it(81),

the relationship between the two tendencies being one of vacillation. This original sinfulness is a received condition of guilt: it is complete incapacity for good (i.e. for that which is determined for the God-consciousness), and has its grounds in our own being. For the idea of imputed guilt Schleiermacher substitutes the idea of an absolutely identical common guilt for all. The sin of all generations is original, in the sense of being universal and prior to individual action, it is also originated with regard to the previous generation and originating with regard to that following. That is,

Schleiermacher is claiming that all sin is due to the original sinfulness in humanity which, as it existed before the first actual sin was committed, cannot be traced to any one human being or action - yet it has corporate implications. This original sinfulness is only truly original before the individual is spontaneously active, although it can grow in itself due to individual action, much as a tendency is strengthened by habit. So it is both original and originating. This is one point at which the relation of the individual to the corporate is important. Due to the above, guilt may be said to be individual; also because original sin, being grounded in the individual, is sufficient grounds for all actual sins, which are themselves individual, being determined by individual temperament and voluntary action. However, the corporate nature of sin and particularly of guilt is the aspect which Schleiermacher stresses. Original sin is a corporate matter, transmitted by the individual to others, and implanted within them(82), and therefore

..whether... we regard it as guilt and deed or rather as a spirit and a state, it is in either case common to all .. (is) in each the work of all and in all the work of each.(83)

The link between the universality of guilt and corporate responsibility seems somewhat weak, but it is important for Schleiermacher because it is linked to consciousness of the universal need of redemption:

...the denial of the corporate character of original sin and a lower estimate of the redemption wrought by Christ usually go hand in hand.(84)

The question of the punishment of original sin is also linked to the nature of redemption and Schleiermacher denies that original sin should be punished. This is explained further in connection with his idea of God, but here he simply gives as a reason that the prospect of punishment would be a danger to Christian piety, our need of redemption being mediated solely, so he claims, by a consciousness of penal desert, which would make it less pure. The flesh-spirit dualism is also relevant here: he adds that in this case, the sensuous is being made the standard for the spiritual.

Schleiermacher, of course, offers an account not merely of original sin but also of actual sin. Again denying a real distinction between potentiality and actuality, Schleiermacher denies the possibility of any isolation in practice of original sin from actual sin; only that whereas original sin has grounds within the individual prior to action, generation of actual sin requires outside factors of some kind. However original sin is the "unfailing seed" of actual sin. So as original sin is the incapacity for God-consciousness, actual sin is the arrestment of the power of the spirit, it is that which obstructs and opposes the development of the God-consciousness. It is here that the conflict between the flesh and the spirit really comes into focus. The idea is dependent on Schleiermacher's contention early in The Christian Faith(85) that the realm of the God-consciousness is the highest grade of self-consciousness



in which the subject-object antithesis is overcome. Development of this level requires the development also of the second level (self-consciousness itself) to the extent where the lowest grade (animal consciousness - appropriate to young children) has disappeared. Due to the time this takes, and to the corporate nature of guilt which makes sin a community matter, the flesh gets a foothold before the spirit comes to be a reality, gains strength through practice and habit, and by the time the spirit is conscious the flesh is entrenched enough to rebel.

It is here that the spheres of sin and of God-consciousness, as the flesh and the spirit, are clearly explicated. The flesh, "the totality of the so-called lower powers of the soul", is designated as the "source of everything in human action which is incompatible with the God-consciousness." (86) Again, does this also reflect the influence on Schleiermacher of his reading of Plato? The parallels are obvious, as with the gnostic myths of sin and the beginning, but we should note the important distinction that the flesh in itself is not evil. (87) To say that sin is the victory of flesh over spirit is to say that because the flesh is predominant over the spirit, the moment is sin: "what gives a moment the character of sin is the self-centred activity of the flesh." (88) This also recalls Augustine's understanding of concupiscence. Similarly,

...all activities of the flesh are good when subservient to the spirit and all are evil when

severed from it.

This does not mean, however, that the actions of the regenerate are invariably good - there is still some conception of actions as good or bad in themselves - but his sins are such as do not obstruct the spiritual life of the agent himself or of the community.(89) They are no longer originating in themselves, and are merely "the shadow of sin". This parallels the description of actions which precede the development of the God-consciousness as only the "germ" of sin, which "cannot at this stage be regarded as sin in the proper sense." This reference to sin "in the proper sense", like the patristic understanding of "sin properly so called" emphasises the importance of the discussion about the language being used here, which is to be considered in more detail in the conclusion, Chapter Six (pp.304f). So what we have here is a radical definition of sin as resistance to the God-consciousness, upon which attitude depends the classification of specific actions as either sins or merely shadowing sin. In this we see again the contrast of Schleiermacher's pietism with the negative and arid theologising against which he reacted. The nearest Schleiermacher gets to any kind of practical ethic is to say that "sin consists in our desiring what Christ condemns and vice versa."(90)

From the above it can be seen that the dualism of original righteousness and original sin is seen by Schleiermacher as part

of human nature as originally created, and as thus having a divine causality. However, he implicitly deals with the problem of an imperfect creation by relating the creation of humanity with inherent sinfulness specifically to redemption. So sin is part of the divine economy, wrought by God with a view to redemption, not as something contrary to his will. This is why the link between sin and grace is so important - indeed, sin only exists as "attached to grace."(91)

This appears to be a notable deviation from the orthodox view of sin and its insistence that God is in no way the author of sin. For Schleiermacher it is the solution to the problem of the existence of sin and evil in view of divine omnipotence and causality, which is the most important question sin raises for him. I have already referred to Schleiermacher's attitude to the doctrine of the fall and the idea of free will involving sin. He cannot give sin or evil any existence prior to or independent of the creation of humanity because he rules out as inadmissible any distinction in the divine causality between causing and permitting and he is aware that the danger is therefore Manichaeism. His solution, not unlike Calvin's, is that sin is ordained by God as part of redemption, but this is the extent of its existence for Schleiermacher.

We have no choice... than to assert that sin, in so far as it cannot be grounded in the divine causality, cannot exist for God, but that, in so far as the consciousness of our sin is a true element of our being, and sin therefore a reality, it is ordained by God as that which makes redemption necessary.(92)

This in turn is why sin cannot be said to be rebellion against God - it is related to human beings and their needs, and only via this function to God. Neither is it related to God in terms of punishment as orthodox doctrine and tradition would largely see it.(93) Schleiermacher dismisses as primitive and derisory the idea of God's wrath or offence at sin. He also denies the real existence of evil, as this also would necessitate that God was its ultimate cause. However, he does see the interpretation we give of natural "imperfections" (concreated) as being evil, as connected in some way with sin: a connection ordained by God as a form of punishment, which is not reformatory or retributive, but preventative, and thus this too is linked to redemption. This is the real crux of the problem of Schleiermacher's understanding of sin. At the centre of his methodology and epistemology is the reality of sin as the presupposition on which rests our consciousness of the need for redemption: yet he maintains that it is not really real because not divinely caused in itself. Yet to draw too great a distinction between finite and infinite causality and reality is surely against his own principle that divine preservation and natural causation are essentially the same thing. It is a tortuous argument to which Schleiermacher is forced by his conception of God - which in turn is due to his emphasis on the self-consciousness, and by which he hopes to solve the problem of reconciling sin with the divine omnipotence as he sees it: he claims that

The more closely these two things (the non-existence of sin for God and sin as ordained by God for

redemption) are capable of being unified in the sphere of actual fact ... and the more definitely we can keep them apart in our thinking, so that neither will seem to involve the contrary of the other, the more completely shall we find all difficulties disappear....(94)

The implications of Schleiermacher's idea of sin lie chiefly in the area of Christ's work, and the myth of the beginning which it assumes. The human predicament being seen as the conflict of flesh and spirit (i.e. God-consciousness), rather than truly as bondage, slavery to sin, redemption becomes not delivery as such, but the decisive aid in resolving the conflict - absorption into the power of Christ's perfect God-consciousness which gives power to our own spirit. Schleiermacher acknowledges that the term redemption is no longer the most appropriate term for Christ's achievement in comparison with such a description as "completion of human nature".(95) As we noted earlier, there is a symmetry between the doctrines of sin and salvation, and serious alteration in the one will inevitably involve similar alteration in the other if the symmetry is retained at all. However, we should note that Schleiermacher does give place to the pain and misery of sin on the human level, from which Christ can also be said to redeem. His sufferings, however, are no longer central to redemption. They have an important sympathetic role but no special reconciling value. Reconciliation becomes the assumption of believers into the fellowship of Christ's

"unclouded blessedness" and so consciousness of forgiveness replaces the consciousness of sin, which is in itself

.. so little an essential part of the being of man that we can never regard it as anything else than a disturbance of nature.

To sum up, the chief determining factors in Schleiermacher's doctrine of sin are his concept of God's omnipotence - in common with Christian theologians down the ages - and what would today be called an evolutionary and existential anthropology. This latter leads him to an idea of sin which seems to be defined so thoroughly in anthropological terms that it fails to connect adequately with God, despite his omnipotence. This, in turn, means that although sin is methodologically important for Schleiermacher, it seems to lack the doctrinal weight which would allow it to inform his ideas of God and of salvation. In Chapter Three we will note the parallels with Barth's ideas about sin.(96) This analysis of Schleiermacher also serves to highlight themes which have continued to be influential throughout the history of the understanding of sin, and which have persisted into the twentieth century: in particular the conception of sin as negative and the understanding of anthropology from the perspective of Christology.

From these brief outlines we can see the agenda which has been set for discussion about sin. We might well expect the same issues to be important in twentieth century theology. If

they are no longer the same significance then this change could itself be significant. This traditional agenda focuses on the issue of free-will and divine determination as a debate which is crucial for our understanding of sin: does the fact of human sin mean that human beings are self-determining? Do the effects of sin include human inability to take an active role in accepting salvation? If human beings have no ultimate control over their lives can they be held responsible for sin? Do certain views of the determination of human existence by sin lead to unacceptable fatalism? The question of responsibility for sin and the relation of sin to God's will, power and ordination of reality is also crucial, with particular emphasis on the declaration that God is not responsible for sin, and on the need to avoid dualism. The potential of sin to affect God's plans is another key issue.

Discussion about the nature of sin has centred around the idea of negativity, sin as a defection rather than a positive force; something which has a different kind of reality to that of God's good creation. Linked with this idea is the question of sin's status as something which is potent, dangerous and destructive, and yet something which is overcome and which cannot ultimately assail God's goodness. We have also begun to see clearly the interconnections between sin and salvation so that increased pessimism about human sin often accompanies increased optimism about salvation.

Particularly significant in twentieth century theology, where the tendency has become more dominant, is the emphasis on sin's "secondary" nature as a doctrine which is to be derived from salvation in Christ, it is a presupposition of this more important fact. With Schleiermacher we also begin to see some of the implications of the rejection of a historical fall.(97)

These, then, are the perspectives and issues traditionally associated with the doctrine of sin. It is clear from the analyses above, and from the issues associated with the doctrine, that a doctrine of sin is inextricably linked with other doctrines, presuppositions and definitions. To understand particular views of sin it is essential to understand the corresponding views of the relationship between God and humanity, and of creation and salvation. We see that sin is an essentially systematic doctrine, i.e. it cannot be understood without consideration of these interrelationships. The functions of the doctrine may include a significant determination of human nature or of relationship with God as well as its role as the presupposition of salvation. Its contents and significance may in turn be determined by the doctrines of creation and salvation which also have important implications for humanity in relation to God. It is all the more important to see sin within the context of these systematic relationships because of the ever-present paradox of freedom and necessity.



In short,

...we cannot speak properly of sin without speaking, at the same time, of God, his will, grace, salvation, reconciliation with God, repentance, forgiveness of sin etc. Sin is integral to a complex network of theological and doctrinal discourse and we cannot abstract it from that context without distorting or dissolving its meaning.(98)

We will therefore go on to a more thorough examination of sin in this systematic context, taking a number of key figures as examples of different contemporary perspectives and paying particular attention to the inevitable relationships which we have seen in this chapter between sin and God's creation, sin and Christology, and sin and salvation. This analysis will concentrate on these interrelationships and ramifications of sin as much as on definitions of the content and specific meaning of sin, hoping that the real significance and "shape" of the doctrine will thus emerge.

## CHAPTER TWO FOOTNOTES

1. Berkouwer, Sin p.424. He is talking here specifically about original sin.
2. N.P. Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin. p.12. By the fall Williams means to refer to the problem of sin as a whole, for which he maintains a fall doctrine is indispensable. His language echoes that of William Law who claimed that "The whole nature of the Christian religion stands upon these two pillars, namely, the greatness of our fall and the greatness of our redemption.", cited J.R.Coates, referred to by Bruce Milne, "The Idea of Sin in Twentieth Century Theology", p.3.
3. S. Kierkegaard, Der Begriff Angst, 17., quoted J. Ringleben, "Sin and Guilt as Fate of Freedom": sin as a dogmatic problem cannot be the object of any scientific explanation and is not to be explained by dogmatics but is expressed by being presupposed "as a moving something which cannot be grasped by any science."
4. Sin, p.11f. Berkouwer relates the problem of the origin of sin to sin's "riddle", its enigma and inexplicability. The problem concerns the very existence of sin in view of God's goodness and responsibility for creation and the existence of human responsibility in view of the guilt of all men. Cf. also K. Aner and O.Piper, who speak of the "theological problem" of sin, in Twentieth Century Theology in the Making, ed. J. Pelikan.
5. Sin as a Problem of Today.
6. Hardness of Heart: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Doctrine of Sin.
7. J.W.Glazer, "Transition between Grace and Sin: Fresh Perspectives"; K.F.O'Shea, "The Reality of Sin: A Theological and Pastoral Critique"; for further interest in sin among Catholic scholars, in the form of articles, see A.Vanneste, "Towards a Theology of Original Sin"; J.L.Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Perspectives"; P.Fransen, "Towards a Psychology of Divine Grace"; S.Fagan, "Has Sin Changed?"; J.Fuchs, "Sin and Conversion". Also for an overview of Catholic thought on sin see G.Vandervelde, Original Sin.
8. Cf. Schoonenberg, Appendix, p.342.

9. It is interesting to compare what Menninger says with Mary Midgley's analysis, under the heading of the "elusiveness of responsibility", of the process by which public wickedness becomes a social disease and private wickedness becomes a mental illness, Wickedness, p.48.
10. "A Christian Understanding of Sin in the Light of Medicine and Psychiatry".
11. For additional material on Augustine see also E.Portalie, A Guide to the Thought of St.Augustine, trans.R.J.Bastian, Burns & Oates,1960, esp. p.204ff,223ff; G.R.Evans, Augustine on Evil, CUP,1982; H.A.Deane, Political and Social Ideas of St.Augustine, Columbia U.P.,1963; useful material also in H.J.McSorley, Luther: Right or Wrong?, Augsburg Pub.Hse.,1969.
12. On Nature and Grace,21.
13. On Marriage and Concupiscence II.48.
14. Nature, Miracle and Sin p.108.
15. On Nature and Grace 21.
16. On Grace and Free Will. Here Augustine argues for free will from Scripture and from the fact of God's commandments, presupposing responsibility.
17. The other parts of his inheritance are ignorance and the division of will and desire (which is concupiscence).
18. P.Brown, Augustine of Hippo. A Biography. p.374. Cf. Rebuke and Grace.79.
19. Against Two Letters of the Pelagians.1.5ff.
20. On Man's Perfection in Righteousness.9. Cf. Nature and Grace.79.
21. C.Jul.op.imp.III.24. Serm.341.9. Cf. Burnaby, Amor Dei, p.198, notes the chasm in Augustine's thought here as he appeals to human recognition of the justness of retribution while insisting that God's justice is transcendent.
22. In this case, justice means every man receiving his due. On Marriage and Concupiscence.II.22. Again Burnaby (loc.cit.) notes the difficulty which arises when this is related to the doctrine of forgiveness and vicarious suffering.
23. Bonner, St. Augustine of Hippo notes the physiological inaccuracy of Augustine's necessary conclusion that in paradise human sexual control will be just like any other

physical control. p.374.

24. De Duab.Anim. 10,11, quoted Lacey, Nature, Miracle and Sin, p.116.
25. op.cit. 1.25.
26. On Marriage and Concupiscence.1.21.
27. He appeals to the human will in sinning in two ways: first, through identification with Adam, sin human beings cannot avoid is due to their "past" rather than their "present" will. Second, with reference to human consent, which is an act of will. This however still refers to humanity's necessary state of enslavement.
28. On the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins III.3.
29. Confessions I.VIff.
30. ibid. II.11.
31. ibid.I.21.
32. Spirit and the Letter 54.
33. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur,p.48f. cf. also The Conflict of Interpretations, p.274f.
34. Spirit and the Letter. 54.
35. Merits and Forgiveness II.23.
36. TeSelle, Augustine the Theologian, p.165.
37. The Conflict of Interpretations, p.279.
38. Ps. CXVIII.vi.2.
39. Lacey, p.111. Cf. Marriage and Concupiscence II.36. Man has evil rather than being evil.
40. Marriage and Concupiscence II.22.
41. op.cit. 31ff,48ff. Rebuke and Grace 18ff.
42. Grace and Free Will 41ff.
43. Spirit and Letter 60.
44. Rondet, p.122.

45. Chenu argues that Aquinas basically accepted Augustine's "Christian man" : M.-D. Chenu, Towards Understanding St. Thomas, Henry Regnery Co., 1964, p.317. Some of the differences in Aquinas' anthropology and doctrine of sin are due to his distinctions between formal and material causes, between nature and the human being and between original sin and actual sin in terms of will. Aquinas placed more emphasis on the voluntary nature of sin. Cf. Summa Theol. 1a 44-49, 90-102; 1a 2ae 71-89, Blackfriars & Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1963; Chenu, op.cit.; E. Gilson, The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, Victor Gollanz Ltd., 1957 and A History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages VIII, Chapter 3, Sheed & Ward, 1955.
46. For further background on the reformation in general see Trinkhaus & Oberman (eds.), Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, X, Leiden, EJ Brill, 1974; S.E. Ozment ed. The Reformation in Medieval Perspective, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1971; B.A. Gerrish, The Old Protestantism and the New, Essays on the Reformation Heritage (Ch 1), University of Chicago Press, 1982. For further reading on Luther, cf. H.J. McSorley, Luther: Right or Wrong?, Augsburg Pub.Hse., 1969; S.E. Ozment, "Homo Spiritualis. A Comparative study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther (1509-16) in the context of their theological thought", EJ Brill, 1969, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought VI, Part III, Luther, p.87ff; H.A. Oberman, "'Institia Christ' and 'Institia Dei', Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification" Harvard Theological Review, 59.1, Jan.1966, p.1-26; P. Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. R.C. Schultz, Fortress, 1966, esp. Chs 12,13,14; G. Rupp, The Righteousness of God. Luther Studies, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1953; B.A. Gerrish, Grace and Reason, A Study in the Theology of Luther, Oxford, Clarendon, 1962; D.C. Steinmetz, Luther and Staupitz. An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation. Duke University Press, 1980. For additional material on Calvin, cf. T.F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man, Lutterworth, 1949; E.A. Doney, The knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology, Columbia U.P., 1952 (& appendix on the Barth-Brunner debate on Calvin, pp.247ff); R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life, Oliver & Boyd, 1959; T.H.L. Parker, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, Oliver & Boyd, 1952; F. Wendel, Calvin, Collins, 1963; B. Gerrish, The Old Protestantism and the New, Ch.9, "The Mirror of God's Goodness: a key metaphor in Calvin's View of Man", University of Chicago Press, 1982.
47. Inst. 1.1.2, 1.5.13. Cf. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man p.14. He also notes that it is through this process of

knowing that humanity's realisation of its dependence on God derives.

48. Inst. 1.18.1, 3.23.8. Cf. also Gallic Conf. VIII, Belgic Conf.XIII. Extending our references here to the reformed confessions indicates the development and influence of Calvin's thought in Calvinism.
49. Comm.Jn. 3:3. However I think that sin is more for Calvin than "a corollary of the doctrine of grace in forgiveness and salvation" (Torrance, p.15 cf. p.85ff), especially in relation to his view of reprobation.
50. Cf. 2nd Helvetic Conf. (2H) VIII.
51. Cf. Belgic Conf.XIV, Gallic Conf.IX.
52. Comm. Gn. 3:1, cf. Gallic Conf.VIII, Belgic Conf.XIII, 2H VIII.
53. Inst. 3.23.7 cf. 2.4.2.
54. The Christian Faith 44.1, cf. Inst.1.14.16f, 1.14.17. Berkouwer notes that Calvin's main concern is God's omnipotence. Berkouwer himself relates the explanation of sin within the Christian faith, to human guilt, and will allow no possibility of an explanation outside that faith - however he does insist that there must be no room left for a contradiction between God's justice and his mercy, p.410.
55. The Westminster Confession does affirm God's ordination of the fall, IV.
56. Inst. 3.23.8.
57. Inst., 1.14.16, 2.1.10, Comm.Gn. 3:1.
58. Cf. Belgic Conf.XV, Gallic Conf.XI.
59. Comm.Rom. 1:18.
60. Inst. 2.1.8. My emphasis. Cf. Comm.Gn. 8:21.
61. Comm.Rm 7:14, 3:23; Inst.2.3.8, 7.6.5 etc. Comm.Jn. 1:5, 3:6; cf. also Comm.Ezk.11:19f, Inst.1.3.1, 1.5.12.  
What is left to humanity is however important as it leaves us without excuse. Cf. Belgic Conf.XV, Genevan 4, Gallic IX, 2H VIII.
62. Torrance, p.106.
63. Inst. 3.3.20, 3.7.5. etc.

64. Comm.Rm.7, Inst.3.2.18, 3.3.10. etc.
65. Comm.Gn. 6:3.
66. K.Aner, "Sin and Guilt in the History of Doctrine" in Twentieth Century Theology in the Making ed. J.Pelikan.
67. Cf. H.Rondet, Original Sin, p.132; M.Schmaus, Dogma vol.II,p.183f.  
 For further background on Trent see: H.Jedin, A History of the Council of Trent trans. E.Graf, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.,1957,1961, esp.vol.2, Chs.IV,V; P.Janelle, The Catholic Reformation, Collier-Macmillan Pub.Ltd.,1971, esp.Chs.1-V & X; J.Neuner & J.Dupuis, The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church, rev.edn. Catholic Booksellers Pubs.,1975; H.Rondet, op.cit.  
 For general statements of the Catholic understanding of sin see: W.J.MacDonald et al ed. New Catholic Encyclopaedia, "Sin, "Justification"; M.Schmaus, Dogma, vol.2., Sheed & Ward,1969 (p.180ff on Trent); Sacramentum Mundi; cf. also G.Vandervelde, Original Sin; A.Vanneste, "Towards a Theology of Original Sin"; J.L.Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches"; G.Daly, "Theological Models in the Doctrine of Original Sin"; H.Haag, "The Original Sin Discussion, 1966-1971".
68. R.Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I,p.263.
69. I.McGuinness, "Sin", New C.Ency..  
 Vandervelde notes the conflict in Catholic theology after Aquinas between a view of original sin as negative and the Augustinian view, the former generally becoming dominant. op.cit.,p.32ff.
70. Rondet, p.171.
71. Neuner & Dupuis, p.131.
72. On the optimism of the Catholic anthropology cf. New C.Ency.., "Original Justice", "Original Sin", "Optimism","Justification","Sin" and Janelle, op.cit.
73. P.de Letter, New C.Ency.., "Justification" says that Trent's overtly anti-Protestant bias stiffened the oppositions and blurred or left unmentioned points of contact between the Catholic and Protestant doctrines.
74. On Schleiermacher see : H.R.Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology; K.Barth, From Rousseau to Ritschl, SCM,1959; M.Redeker, Schleiermacher-Life and Thought, Walter de Gruyter & Co.,1968; R.R.Niebuhr, Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion, SCM, 1965 (Niebuhr notes the one-sidedness of Mackintosh's account, p.76n.); S.W.Sykes, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Lutterworth,1971;

75. So he speaks of every sin as representing a victory of flesh over spirit, 74.1, and of the world as being determined as evil by the predominance of the flesh rather than the God-consciousness.75.1
76. 89.
77. 79.1.
78. 72.4.
79. 68.3.
80. This faculty was necessary for Christ to be really human, 13.3. and for redemption, which is a preservation of this receptivity, 89.3.
81. 72.6.
82. However, although Schleiermacher elsewhere denies that sin is a matter of social conditioning or imitation, it is difficult to see how original sin can be implanted by others.
83. 71.2.
84. 71.3.
85. 5.2.
86. 71.2.
87. Though he does term the situation as co-existence of two powers at issue with each other, 66.2, redemption - the God-consciousness - is the primary force (cf. redemption as completion of creation).
88. 74.1.
89. 74.4
90. 66.2
91. 80.1.
92. 81.3.
93. Niebuhr sees the absence of talk about infidelity and disobedience to God as due to the "scientific thrust" of the work. Be this as it may, the absence is surely related closely to Schleiermacher's presuppositions, particularly about God.



94. 81.3.
95. 80.
96. Schleiermacher's perspective of the religious consciousness is the perspective with which David Kelsey is concerned, "Human Being", in Christian Theology ed. Hodgson and King (see Appendix A. p.244f).
97. The significance of the abandonment of the fall narrative and of the shift to Christological understandings of anthropology and of sin are noted by R.R.Williams, "Sin and Evil", and D.Kelsey, "Human Being", who see the two trends as related and as decisive for theological anthropology and for ideas about sin. Christian Theology, ed. P.Hodgson and R.King.
98. I.Dalferth, "How is the Concept of Sin related to the Concept of Moral Wrongdoing?", 3EC p.25. Dalferth's paper is an answer to that of Basil Mitchell, which has the same title. He objects to Mitchell's approach to sin from the side of moral wrongdoing, insisting that sin must be seen in its theological context. In this paper, however, he is concerned simply with a demonstration of the inadequacy of a purely moralistic approach to sin.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### KARL BARTH AND EMIL BRUNNER

As an exploration of the doctrine of sin and as an experiment in its connections with other doctrines, my analysis in the next three chapters will necessarily involve a panoramic view. This means that I will spend time understanding each particular theology as a whole, outlining the basic motivations and concerns, the determinative presuppositions and the key doctrines so that the place and function of the doctrine of sin will be seen in its context, so that the doctrine per se can be properly understood. This perspective will include some consideration of the role of anthropology within the theology in question, an issue which is inextricably tied up with the definition and the functioning of the doctrine of sin. The aim of this broad, but necessarily brief outline, as noted in Chapter One, is not a study of the theologians as such, nor of their own specific doctrines of sin for their own sakes but it is to give us a correct and systematic understanding of "options they illuminate" to use Kelsey's phrase.(1)

The options illuminated by Barth and Brunner arise from their dogmatic view of theology. For both Barth and Brunner the task of theology as dogmatics is the believing exposition and mirroring of the Word of God which functions, in various ways, as source and norm.

In dogmatics our question is: What are we to think and say? Of course, that comes after we have learned from Scripture where we have to draw this 'what' from, and keeping in view the fact that we have to say something not just theoretically, but have to call something out to the world.(2)

It is the believing Church itself which, in dogmatics, makes its own teaching the object of reflection; essentially, dogmatics claims to be an academic study controlled by the Church.(3)

The theologies which their respective understandings of the Word of God have led Barth and Brunner to expound have been variously characterised as "theology of the Word", "crisis theology", "dialectic theology", "neo-orthodoxy". Each of these titles applies to both Barth and Brunner in some respects and at some stage in the development of their thought. Both were reacting against theological liberalism with its supposed optimism and its anthropocentricity, represented first of all by Schleiermacher. Points of comparison are to be expected between Barth and Brunner, given their common starting point in outlook and motivation. However the rift between them proclaimed in Natural Theology and Nein! in 1934 is of particular significance for this thesis, centering around the role of anthropology within theology and the doctrines of humanity and sin. It is the differences between Barth and Brunner which will particularly highlight the implications of the perspectives of a dogmatic and "neo-orthodox" theology for our area and the tensions involved. Critique and a consideration of this comparison will come at the end of the chapter, after general outlines of both Barth and Brunner.

## KARL BARTH

### Revelation and knowledge of God

While not wishing to enter the debate about the possibility of isolating one key doctrine or principle in Barth's theology in terms of which everything else should be understood(4), a central factor is Barth's view of God's revelation of grace in Christ.(5) This revelation, the Word of God, is the task and the possibility as well as the object of theology as such. It is the revelation of God by himself to humanity, it is his "coming", which is totally dependent on his own will and action. Behind this emphasis on the sole efficiency of God's action, at least in Barth's earlier work, is his insistence on God's irrevocable otherness.(6) There is no unity between humanity and God as there is underlying other perceptions. Barth therefore rejects vehemently the notion of the analogia entis, which presupposes some such unity, preferring the analogia gratia or analogia fidei, by which any correspondence between human theologising and talk about God and the truth of God is due to God's grace, not to any innate or inevitable coherence.

...our whole inquiry as to the knowability of God can consist only in a conscious and therefore finally a confident return to the decision which has been taken in the being of God - the decision that God is knowable.(7)

... by the capacity of the object, it is a true viewing and conceiving.(8)

In The Christian Life, which includes Barth's latest writings, Barth still maintains this unlikeness between God and humanity:

What is common to him and them is neither a nature that embraces and determines him and them, nor an act

common to him and them, but simply the free will and the free work of his grace, goodness and mercy, a participation in his being and life which is freely granted to them, but which, even as it is granted to them, remains his and is never theirs.(9)

So knowledge of God is dependent on God's giving himself to be known. The stance of the human being as the subject dealing with the object in theology is determined by that object: "Only because God posits Himself as the object is man posited as the knower of God"(10); knowledge of God is "an event utterly undetermined by man but utterly determined by God as its object."(11) This understanding lies behind Barth's rejection of Schleiermacher's anthropology and his emphatic Nein! to Brunner and to any suggestion of "natural theology" because of their attribution to humanity of some inherent and material potentiality for knowledge of God. For Barth such a capacity presupposes unacceptable continuity between the human being and God. It is unacceptable because God's being cannot be on the same plane as ours due to his nature as the origin and boundary of all being. It would also allow for the possibility of human beings somehow having control over revelation, and having God "at (their) disposal" - even the possibility of a human being choosing for or against knowledge of God, which would mean a diminution in God. Despite the impression which a first reading of Nein! might give, Barth does accept an objective basis for knowledge of God and of the virtutes Dei revealed in creation but this is totally hidden from the "natural human being" as a result of the fall.(12)

In The Christian Life Barth goes even further in saying that the concealment of what God does objectively, as Creator in the world, is itself broken and becomes transparent at least in places.

In spite of all the worldliness and unfaithfulness and ignorance of people does not God in fact see to it that the knowledge of God is not ineffective, that people must ... know about God and therefore know what they do not want to know or in fact seem to know? Must they not simply because the objective knowledge of God seems to be stronger than all their unfaithfulness and ignorance, because his openness for the world seems to be stronger than its being closed against him? Will not this objective knowledge be at least as strong in places as that mediated to the world through the witness of Christianity?(13)

However Barth does not really accept the implications of this, and while accepting the "serious force" of these impressions, says that they should not be systematised along the lines of natural theology. Natural theology means for him the transformation of revelation from a question put to humanity into an answer given by human beings.(14) Barth's insistence on the human role in theology as that of a recipient is the theological basis for what Sykes calls Barth's "romantic aversion to abstract clarity", which denies the theologian the right to clarify his meaning through fear that he may thus find himself controlling it.(15) This train of thought reflects Barth's reaction to theological liberalism and to Feuerbach's critique of religion as man's projection of himself. It also ties up with his view of anthropology.

#### Theological Anthropology

Humanity's status as the subject determined by the self-giving

of the "object", God, means that theological anthropology is for Barth the inquiry into the creatureliness presupposed in this relationship and made known by it.(16) A human being's position as the object of theological anthropology depends on his or her relationship to and being addressed by God.

We do not understand man in his own light. In all these determinations we understand man as the man who is set before God by God himself.(17)

In direct opposition to a view such as Rahner's (see Chapter Four) Barth maintains that "theology can never be anthropology because it is the interpretation of the Word of God spoken to the actuality and truth of man."(18) In short, anthropology has a fairly subsidiary role, derived exclusively from the primary task of theology, which is "a response to election".(19) There is no theological anthropology in its own right.(20)

As the primary source of knowledge about humanity the Word of God and God's determination of human beings have priority over any other kind of knowledge about humanity. Empirical observation has only a subsidiary and supplementary place and cannot lead to any knowledge of true, i.e. redeemed, human beings. The data of science can be recognised as part of the symptoms of and related to true humanity once we have this knowledge. In the light of God's word the true nature of humanity can be seen even in its degenerate nature.(21) Barth emphasises - at least in his later work - the status given to humanity as the object of God's revelation and thus of

theological anthropology, and says that more precisely, the Christian science and doctrine of God should be termed "The-anthropology".(22) However "speculative" anthropology is the enemy of Christianity, positing an independent viewpoint, beginning ultimately with self-confidence.(23) Barth asserts that we must not allow our opponents to determine the form of the question about humanity. Human self-understanding is not to be taken seriously, it is to be reversed, refounded.(24) This determination of "real humanity" as "redeemed humanity" has serious implications, as Brunner noted, and as we will consider in the critique.

However Barth does, again in The Humanity of God, allow a place for "legitimate Christian thinking from below and moving up, from man who is taken hold of by God to God who takes hold of man", for "the attempt of Christian anthropocentrism".

Theology is in reality not only the doctrine of God, but the doctrine of God and man... Starting from below, as it were, with Christian man, it (nineteenth century theology) could and should have struggled its way upward to an authentic explication of the Christian faith. It could and should have sought increasingly to validate the Christian message as God's act and word, the ground, object and content of faith.(25)

Barth, however, does not himself start "from below" in this way. I will say more about his doctrine of humanity in due course.

An important corollary of the above is that Christian



revelation and theology as such are not, for Barth, open to independent or external assessment or validation.

'From outside' means from the point of view of a human position where truth, dignity and competence are so ascribed to human seeing, understanding and judging as to be judge over the reality and possibility of what happens here. But this is the very thing which is excluded by the inner understanding of what happens...(26)

It is against this kind of position that Pannenberg insists on anthropology as precisely the area where theology must do battle with enlightenment atheism in order to be heard and to have value for the modern world. (27) Although Barth criticises nineteenth century theology for making confrontation with the world into the guiding principle of theology, he sees its exposing of theology to the world as its strength:

Obviously theology has always been to some extent open towards and related to the world, consciously or unconsciously. It should be so. Retreats behind Chinese Walls never served theology well. It must be engaged in conversation with the contemporary world, whatever the means of dialogue.(28)

However the position from which this conversation takes place must for Barth be the position of the knowledge of God, a position from which we can understand all positions, a "neutrality", "full of superiority and unassailability".(29)

#### God, Creation and Election

What is the character of the Christian God who reveals himself to humanity? For Barth in his earlier work, God is characterised chiefly by otherness; he is incomprehensible, inconceivable, unsearchable, he has might, ability and possibility. All reality rests on God as its possibility.(30)

God's power is not power in itself, but is legitimate power based on law, potestas not potentia.(31) In The Humanity of God Barth analyses this early tendency as a reaction against the nineteenth century reduction of God to a symbol or an expression of human experience, which led Barth himself to view God as the wholly other, isolated, abstracted and absolutised:

We... set it over against man, this miserable wretch - not to say boxed his ears with it - in such a fashion that it continually showed greater similarity to the deity of the God of the philosophers than to the deity of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.(32)

He goes on to set out the new task of deriving from this new knowledge of God's deity from knowledge of his humanity: deity is to be understood in dialogue with human beings, only here does it find its meaning and power.(33) So also in The Gift of Freedom he says that God's freedom is not unlimited possibility or naked sovereignty but it exists in the will and determination to be humanity's God.

This will and freedom of God is expressed in creation and at the centre of creation is Christ. The Incarnation represents the overlapping of God and humanity, eternity and time, and Christ is therefore the security for the reality of creature and Creator.(35) Our humanity, derived from Christ's, is also between the two worlds of heaven and earth. (36) So it is in Christ that it is possible that "God does not grudge the world distinct from Himself, its own reality, nature and freedom."(37), and that while the terminus a quo of creation is

the good pleasure of the free omnipotence of the divine love, its terminus ad quem is the reality elected, posited and limited by the divine love, of something not divine, something absolutely independent.(38) Another way Barth expresses this is in the coterminous nature of creation and covenant: "Creation is the outward basis of the covenant (Gen.1) and the covenant is the inward basis of creation (Gen.2)."(39) Creation is grace, it is a temporal analogue of the event by which God is the Father of the Son(40), and it is God's election, in Christ, of humanity. This thought is decisive for Barth's theology. Dogmatics has no concern with providing a cosmology or world view because its concern is this electing word of God. This means that for Barth the doctrine of creation in practice means anthropology: its real concern is the relationship of God and humanity.(41) Creation is not just the beginning of the created order and thus of God's relationship with it, but it is the determination of that order.

The determination for God, for brotherhood with his Son, which is granted to human nature in and with its creation, is the unlost and unlosable determination of his (the Christian's) existence, too, no matter whether it be fulfilled or not in his life.(42)

God's election in creation has two particular corollaries. Firstly it means that human beings are important because they are the ones whom God has chosen. Election is the basis of the distinction of human beings as such in creation.

Man is not elected to intercourse with God because, by virtue of his humanity, he deserved such preference. He is elected through God's grace alone. He is elected, however, as the being especially endowed by God's grace. This is manifest in his special bodily nature...(43)

Human beings are the theological centre of creation, despite their insignificance as creatures among creatures.(44) Human beings, as elected in Christ, also are involved in this overlapping of heaven and earth, "equally bound and committed to both." (45) This position of being "in-between" is founded on humanity's election in Christ who was first "in-between" in the Incarnation. Any talk of capacity in humanity is again ruled out. The fact of election transcends the being of all God created. It happens to and not in human nature and its possibilities, to and not in human history and its development.(46) This is to say that anthropology must be derived from Christology. Our truth is our being - as created and elected - in Christ. The "special task" of theological anthropology is to see what the "creaturely nature of man unbroken by sin is." (47) This raises an obvious problem because human beings are sinful and Christ is God. Barth outlines certain minimal requirements and criteria for a definition of or knowledge of humanity which can be derived from Christ:

- humanity must be seen as in relationship with God.
- humanity is conditioned by the fact that revelation is for human beings.
- human beings are under God's Lordship.
- human being and action consist in being for God.(48)

There is no abstract humanity and therefore no correspondingly abstract human self-understanding. Man is no more, no less, no other than what he is through and with and for Jesus Christ ... Without Christ he would not be man at all.

Thus the Christian view of man in all its particularity is basic and normative for the view of man in general and as such. What the Christian knows

about himself he has to attest to the non-Christian as valid also for him. ...(49)

Secondly, as a corollary of God's election in creation, sin is a possibility excluded by creation and covenant.(50) Evil has no place in the creation of God or the creatureliness of human beings(51), it "can be explained neither from the side of the Creator nor from that of the creature, neither as the action of the Creator nor as the life-act of the creature..."(52). As we shall see however Barth does try to explain sin's existence in his problematic work on Nothingness. Although Barth does also want to insist on the reality of sin the being of a human being is not changed by sin(53), but the human spirit is "naturally Christian".(54) "There is no man but the man of the covenant."(55) We will come back to Barth's view of sin later.

#### Redemption and the Incarnation

Pursuing the nature of anthropology as deriving from Christology, we find that this is part and parcel of Barth's understanding of redemption as centering around the Incarnation. The nature of human being is the nature of being redeemed by Christ, a redemption achieved through the identification of Christ with us and his substitution for us in the fact of the Incarnation. Everything is done for us in Jesus Christ. The Incarnation was God's will from eternity(56): God's creative election and his redemptive election are one and the same. Barth was critical of Brunner for distinguishing between election or salvation and creation, but his own identification of the two raises problems which I will consider later. Jesus

is the maintaining and fulfilling of the divine judgment and thus of the covenant.(57) The work of atonement is fulfilment of the communion between God and humanity as the one who overcomes sin.(58) This takes place in the exercising of God's wrath upon Jesus so that we are no longer subject to it, there is no "second order" of creation, i.e. an order of wrath.(59) Christ is the model of both the elect and the rejected so that in their rejection the Godless are bearing witness to Christ.(60) In the Incarnation Jesus thus reveals human rebellion and God's wrath. He is the figure of the human being smitten by God(61), and his death is the death of the covenant breaker.(62) His death is also the taking away of the power of death, "real death, death as the condemnation and destruction of the creature, death as the offender against God and the last enemy."(63) In his burial the covenant-breaker is buried and destroyed and in his resurrection God proclaims his sentence that human beings are suitable to be his own partners, in Christ.(64) This is why and how the Incarnation is a decision about humanity:

...a decision...concerning the being and nature of every man. By the mere fact that with him and among all other men He too has been made a man.(65)  
 ...the existence of Jesus Christ is the sovereign decision upon the existence of every man.(66)

Christ's death and resurrection are God's No and Yes to sinful and to redeemed humanity. This is why anthropology is Christology, because all humanity is to be seen in Christ, in whom the decision has been made:

And we may and should understand ourselves as men seen by God in Him, in this man, as men made known to Him in this way. Before His eyes from eternity God keeps men, each man, in Him, in this One; and not only

before His eyes but loved and elect and called and made His possession ... Everything is decided about us in Him, in this one man.(67)

In the light of this, godlessness is ontologically impossible. "Man is not without, but with God"(68), the world is objectively overcome by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ(69), the "rent tearing human existence to its depths is healed and closed in virtue of a historical relation to genuine transcendence."(70) It is because Jesus is sinful humanity that "real" humanity is redeemed humanity; in this line of thought sinful humanity, I will argue, as humanity living today in alienation from God, is lost completely. Barth talks about judgment in terms of emancipation(71), aid and acquittal(72): its purpose is that God wills to have humanity for himself(73), and he will not have a negative answer.(74) In short, redemption is unopposable - it is achieved on humanity's behalf and human beings are thus accepted by God, they have no eternal choice.(75) God sees human beings in spite of sin, finding them blameless in Jesus(76): their "evil past is not merely crossed out because of its irrelevancy. Rather, it is in the good care of God."(77) Again this is linked in with the covenant, which Barth describes as "a more or less one-sided decree."(78) Grace and covenant is primary, sin is secondary(79) and the choice of the godless human against God is void because "he belongs eternally to Jesus Christ and therefore is not rejected but elected by God in Jesus Christ."(80) This is how election occurs to and not in human nature and history (cf.p.87f above). So sin is secondary to grace, an episode; it belongs within the context

of reconciliation(81) where it is "overshadowed and crowded into the margins by grace."(82) This thought takes the form of a broad supralapsarianism within which there is no chance of human beings overturning God's purpose which is not only ordained but already achieved before the fall.(83) So God no longer takes human beings seriously as sinners.(84)

If salvation is thus achieved for human beings and they are accepted by God then the function of redemption which still remains incomplete is the unveiling of this fact. This is an area where Barth is much criticised, I believe with reason, and it is linked to the charge, also levelled at Barth, of universalism, to which I will return. Barth says that all sin consists in unbelief, in ignoring our origins in what God has done for us: he describes human being in responsibility as response to God and thus as a matter of knowledge, and talks of human beings fulfilling their being (i.e. the being achieved in Christ) in knowledge.(86) Our future as Christians "consists in our being shown that all was right and good in our existence and in this evil; world- history and - miracle on miracle! - in the still more evil Church history .... because Christ was in the centre."(87)

### Humanity

What, then is the role of humanity? The human role is a response of faith, gratitude and obedience. In Dogmatics in



Outline Barth stresses the nature of faith as the meeting of God and humanity(88), a meeting which involves the gift of freedom to human beings enabling them to trust and to choose life with God. "Their only choice can be to live this new life, which here and now is already theirs, by seeking it where it is, namely in Christ."(89) In The Christian Life Barth is particularly concerned with the responsive life of the Christian which he characterises above all as invocation. This invocation of God and his kingdom by the Christian expresses gratitude, praise and petition, it is the normal action which corresponds to the fulfilment of the covenant in Christ.(90) In these later writings Barth is particularly concerned to allow a place for the human being as God's partner, co-determining his actions.(91) The Christian's choice may be described as a repetition of God's choice(92), but Barth wants here to stress human significance in this response and human responsibility in knowledge will and act. His work on the Christian life is certainly far from unhelpful, but it relates to redeemed humanity, as real humanity: we will question whether this is sufficient content for a doctrine of humanity per se. The content which Barth gives the idea of freedom here, as freedom to choose the good, is like that of Augustine. The human being does not have choice between good and evil, "sin as an alternative is not anticipated or included in the freedom given to man by God", but freedom as a gift of God is the unambiguous willing of the human being to be God's creature: this is real freedom, though an imperfect mirroring of God's own freedom.(93)

Barth also characterises the Christian life as one of conflict, and here we come back to his thought about sin. We exist "between the times and therefore in the sphere of the great ambivalence of light and darkness that desecrates the name of God." (94) We experience continual war between faith and unbelief (95), and the tension of the "fatal contradiction of righteousness and sin by which the world and the church are ruled...takes on the scandalous form that I and you are at one and the same time both righteous and sinners." (96). We should note that if we question the reality of sin for Barth then the reality of this tension will also be thrown into doubt. Over against this tension is the kingdom of God, which is God Himself in the act of "normalizing" human existence, overcoming the disorder which still rules humanity. (97) Caught between the "contradiction" and the kingdom of God, the Christian's task is one of protest against disorder, it is a rising and revolting against the actualization of the bad possibility, as a complement to the struggle for the actualization of the good possibility of the kingdom of God. Does this mean that Barth does allow for revolt against God, or rejection of him? He says, in The Christian Life, that the human world exists in an unordered and undetermined relationship to God and is guilty because of the ambivalence in which it lives. (98) People have themselves appealed to an alien dominion and this is their guilt. (99) Again, Barth talks of the fact of ignorance of God in the world and the possibility of ignorance of him in the Church. (100) The relationship of this to what we have said above

about the unassailable nature of salvation can be seen partly in the declaration that:

In (Christ's) knowledge of God a decision is made concerning theirs. Their knowledge of God is enclosed in his ... In relation to Jesus Christ, ignorance of God can be recorded and defined only as an exclusive and absurd possibility.(101)

Knowledge is thus also achieved on humanity's behalf, in Christ, and the very concession that sin and ignorance of God exist is blasphemy. However this is also to be seen in terms of Barth's doctrine of sin as Nothingness.

### Sin

Sin for Barth is essentially the concrete and active form of "Nothingness", in which the human being becomes victim and servant, sharing the nature of Nothingness, producing and extending it.(102) Knowledge of sin, like knowledge of humanity and of God, is derived from Christ. We learn what sin is by seeing what it was that Christ overcame. However what we can know from ourselves - weakness, decay etc. - is not really sin but rather is the negative aspect of creation which belongs to the essence of creaturely existence: its "no-" which stands in antithesis to its "yes", both of which together constitute the goodness of God's creation.(103) This antithesis is relative and provisional, "merely within creation and therefore dialectical". It is the goodness of creation (although continually confronted by the menace of Nothingness) because God suffered both its yes and its no in Christ and because it is God's work and therefore cannot in its nature share in chaos, and thus in opposition to

God.(104) Indeed to treat it as such is to slander creation and to overlook the seriousness of real Nothingness.

### Genesis 3

Although Nothingness is Barth's own explanation of sin, he does not disregard the Genesis narrative which he designates as "saga".(105) Its status as saga is still the status of biblical witness, and it can still have the status of "history" as an event between God and humanity, although it is not "historical" in terms of the general conception of historical truth: it is truly historical reality, Geschichtliche, but not historical history, historische Geschichte, and it reflects purely divine events.(106) Barth rejects the category of myth as throwing doubt upon the substance of the Bible witness, and as seeing the events of myth not as historical but as "so-called non-spatial timeless truth, in other words, a human creation."(107)

Barth sees Adam as summing up all humanity, not in terms of heredity but because he was reached first by the Word of God in a way which is typical for all humanity. The garden of Eden prefigures the entire situation and history of humanity: all history is Adamic history, although not by succession or even by imitation: "No one has to be Adam". We are so, however, freely and responsibly. Although Adam is not really significant in himself, except as the first, primus inter pares, the fall is highly significant in setting a definite "circumference" to

history. It is the event which constitutes the plane of historical being. Barth is opposed to any emphasis or speculation on the pre-fall, golden age, and sees the fall saga as functioning to begin the history of the covenant of grace with a description of the conflict.(108) The fall is thus the presupposition of our history, not within that history. Adam's fall is determinative for humanity therefore not as fate, but as the truth of humanity's relationship with God. It is God who establishes this relationship.(109) Given the choice between good and evil, a human being will "always" and "necessarily" fail.

He will not achieve that which is right but that which is not right. Unlike God's, man's decision will be a decision for evil, destruction and death: not because he is man, but because he is only man and not God; because the willing of good and salvation and life as such is a concern of God which cannot be transferred to any other being.(110)

However the human decision for evil, for existence without and apart from God is an impossible decision, a choice of an impossibility. God has already chosen for human beings in their election in Christ and only in ignorance of this fact can a human being mistakenly imagine that he or she has the power to make eternal choices, "as if he were a second God".

Genesis is also illuminating with regard to the nature of sin which is essentially the refusal to be the creature of God. However the real significance of Adam is related to Christ, the first and true Adam, of which the other is only a type. The

determination of the fall is always to be seen within the greater determination of election in Christ.

Genesis is thus for Barth an "intuitive and poetic picture of a prehistorical reality of history", which is, however, to be seen within the context of Christology. Barth, like Brunner and Ricoeur, sees the serpent as indicating prior evil, but he does not stress the anthropological nature of the saga in attributing sin to human free choice and such an anthropological exposition would not be consistent with other aspects of his thought.

#### Nothingness

The closest Barth comes to an explanation of the origin of sin is in his conception of Nothingness. The real and absolute antithesis is that between God and Nothingness, and this is also the nearest Barth comes to explaining the origin of sin and evil. The ontic context of Nothingness, as of all that is, is God's election. Just as willing implies non-willing, election implies rejection. Nothingness is that which God rejected in the act of creating and its existence is thus as inherent contradiction, impossible possibility.(112) It can be ascribed no existence at all except in confrontation with God's non-willing. Barth talks about creation as the separation of creatureliness and Nothingness(113), which, as part of God's electing will, is why Nothingness is not to be seen as part of human nature.

That which God renounces and abandons in virtue of his decision is not merely nothing. It is nothingness, and has as such its own being, albeit malignant and perverse. A real dimension is disclosed, and existence and form are given to a reality sui generis, in the fact that God is wholly and utterly not the Creator in this respect. Nothingness is that which God does not will. It lives only by the fact that it is that which God does not will. But it does live by this fact. For not only what God wills, but what He does not will, is potent, and must have a real correspondence.(114)

This existence of sin is a third type of existence, distinct from the existence of that which exists and the non-existence of that which does not exist, and it therefore cannot be the object of natural knowledge because it is inexplicable and unsystematizable. At this point in his thought Barth acknowledges the influence of Schleiermacher from whom we learn that the existence of nothingness is in its negation by God's grace and that it exists only in relation to God's grace, and we will find him also subject to some of the criticisms we made of Schleiermacher in Chapter Two. Without God's negation sin would be incapable of either reality or being. It "owes its existence to God in the sense that He has not elected and willed, but ignored, rejected, excluded and judged, or as Schleiermacher would say 'negated' it." (115) Evil, sin and death, as that to which God said no, thus have a "reality behind God's back. But if being is to be ascribed to it (evil) at all, and we would rather not say that it is non-existent, then it is only the power of the being which arises out of the weight of the divine 'No'." (116) It is, however, necessary as the presupposition of salvation, it must exist because God takes account of it and this is why it is not simply that which is not. It is

the reality on whose account God Himself willed to become a creature...yielding and subjecting Himself to it...in order to overcome it...,

it is "that which brought Jesus to the cross and which he defeated and only here can be seen its reality." (117) Barth foresees the question as to why something can have reality when God has negated it, but rules the question out of bounds. (118) We should be concerned rather with God's action in the Incarnation.

This existence of impossibility carries over into human actions as concrete sin. Choice against God is choice of Nothingness, it is null and impotent, as we have seen because of election, yet we do sin. This sin is negation, and as such it is a reality but is not autonomous. (119) It has its basis in humanity's fall from God, but this is only an attempted fall and alienation, a "dreadful 'as if'." (120) This is why ignorance of God is a fact, but it is an excluded and absurd possibility. (121) Thus the reality of sinful humanity is a pseudo-reality: yet as such, this existence still has catastrophic consequences. (122) The conflict of the Christian also can only be that between what is absolutely and exclusively possible and what is absolutely and utterly impossible. (123) For Barth the very existence of sin in view of God's good creation and his will to elect and save is a paradox, but he has to accept the paradox at some level, he does not want merely to conclude that sin does not really exist. The extent to which he



can avoid this conclusion is a key issue in my critique. Barth also talks of the human being as a prisoner of Nothingness - not having the capacity to sin.(124) Nothingness is the "larger" reality, it is more than human sin, having also the form of real evil and death, and yet it is not a fate inevitably bound up with human nature.(125)

The "contradiction" of sin also includes the fact that it is always that which is past, it is always defeated and under God, and can only fulfil its destiny as such. It "has its reality and character, plays its role as the adversary God has routed."(126) It is God who deals with Nothingness, not human beings. Although God is taking up humanity's cause and struggle, as the one overcome by Nothingness, the struggle is God's affair, his cause and contention, in which he "allows" human beings a share. It is a struggle and a paradox which is external to humanity and this is the nub of Barth's understanding of sin and its inadequacy. In sin human beings are lost to themselves, not to their Creator, because as far as God is concerned, sin is already dealt with. It is human beings who need reconciling, not God. His kingdom of divine order stands as an unbreachable dam against the kingdom of disorder.

So we come back finally to the role of the Christian Church, that of invocation, which means the Church's recognition

and proclamation of God's victory and kingdom, and her resistance against the appalling and impossible possibility of disorder and godlessness. Her invocation in itself is

a sign that neither man's breaking away from God, nor the unrighteousness and disorder of his existence, nor the manifestation of this in the lordship of the powers which he has unleashed and which oppress and afflict him, can establish a definitive situation or represent an ineluctable fate.

Jesus Christ is the new thing...He is the total and definitive limitation of human unrighteousness and disorder.(127)

#### EMIL BRUNNER

Following an outline of Barth's thought by an outline of Brunner it will be impossible to avoid comparisons between them. At this stage however comparison will be used as a means of elucidating Brunner's thought and critical comment will be left until the end of the chapter.

#### Revelation and Knowledge of God

For Brunner also, God's revelation of grace in Christ is central to the theological task and to human being. Brunner puts more stress on Scripture as the norm of theology, functioning as a relative authority because it is the primary witness to revelation.(128) Scripture deals with relations and events, not "doctrines": it is a history of revealing and knowing.(129) The real and absolute norm of theology is Christ himself, he is the "real" content of revelation, the Logos, the event in which the



Word of God, as absolute demand, is given, in which indeed God himself is present personally. "To be determined by this event, this fact of the Word, this Word incarnate is faith." For Brunner it is particularly significant that the event of revelation is the event of being addressed by another: as such, as a real relation to a real "Thou" it makes us responsible.(130)

The act of revelation rests on God's will, his will to Lordship and fellowship, and consequently "participates in the unconditioned character of the divine will."(131) However it also rests for Brunner on personal correspondence, "the fundamental category of the Biblical revelation."(132) In this correspondence God is always and inconvertibly first, the human always and inconvertibly second; God's relation to humanity has no sort of presupposition in a relation of humanity to God, but the human being is a counterpart for God, created by God as a human being over against him. This correspondence becomes clear in the correlation between the Word of God and "Faith". So it is vital for Brunner that, in the indirectness of the divine self-communication (i.e. in the Incarnation),

God does not force Himself upon man, that He does not overwhelm him with His creative power, but that He summons him to make his own decision.(133)

Although the world created by God is fundamentally different from God's being, for Brunner the analogia entis is essential. It cannot be severed from the doctrine of creation, and it is

presupposed when we talk of God speaking to us.(134) The analogia entis, which is presupposed by the analogia fidei(135), can be seen to be fundamental in the centrality of the Word and the Person to theology and to talk about God. So Christian theology

is a positive theology which rests upon the truth that there is a relation of similarity between God's being as Person and the being of man as human, thus between the Being of God and the being of His creatures, which makes the use of such human, parabolic language legitimate. (136)

Brunner does refute the use of analogy along Neo-Platonic lines which makes it into a principle of natural theology. Such a use presupposes the inviolable character of human knowledge because of humanity's creation in the image of God. Brunner points out that God's revelation in creation alone is not sufficient to lead to true knowledge of God and that human beings inevitably misinterpret what glimpses of God there are in creation because they are sinful. However he insists on the importance of natural theology. It is not a "negligible quantity", but "a very important part of Christian Theology, especially in the doctrine of man."(137) Correct understanding of the analogia entis and true knowledge of God from creation require enlightenment through God's Word, but for Brunner human beings can have some kind of knowledge of God, albeit always a mixture of true knowledge and deification of the creature, that is through creation and through his or her God-given abilities as a human being. The question is, for Brunner, one of the doctrine of humanity not the doctrine of God. (He sees it as undeniable

that God, as Creator, leaves some imprint of the mark of his Spirit on creation). What is at issue for Brunner is the effect of sin and human responsibility. While he maintains, with Barth, that the "God" or "gods" human beings postulate in their sin are false, they are lying pictures of idols(138), and while he may not seem to be asserting much more than Barth in terms of what human beings can actually know apart from revelation in Christ, the points he really wants to defend and the points of real difference from Barth are important.

#### Theological Anthropology

At the centre of the issue is the nature of humanity. For Brunner, creation is the beginning of God's kenosis. "He limits Himself by the fact that the world over against Himself is a real existence." The human being, the purpose of God's creation, is a being who stands "over against" God.(139) As such, the human being is responsible. For Brunner this responsibility means that human beings have the ability to accept or refuse revelation which is the idea Barth wants to guard against in his denial of natural theology; it means that human beings are responsible for their perversion of the glimpses of God which are in creation: they are guilty, and therefore subject to judgment. It also means that human self-understanding is to be taken seriously. The sphere of revelation is the reality of human sin, divine wrath and divine necessity of punishment.(140) The status of humanity, for Brunner, must start with God's revelation in Christ. However

this does not mean that anthropology is to be derived from Christology, for "To look at man in the light of Jesus Christ is not the same thing as knowing Jesus Christ." (141) This coheres with Brunner's three-fold anthropology in Man in Revolt (142), in which his doctrine of humanity takes into account its origin, i.e. human creation in the image of God; contradiction, i.e. sin, as well as the actual state of humanity living in conflict between these two. So human beings are to be seen before God, but they are before God in a state of contradiction. "Real man is the unity of creation, disintegrated by sin. He is dissolved unity. (142) There "is no such thing as a neutral secular humanum which as such would have nothing to do with God" (144), because human beings live always in relation to God though the relationship is perverted. The reality of the human being as sinner is vital, and is revealed in Christ, but it is not lost in Christ as it seems to be for Barth.

This means that apologetics is an important task, "as urgent and as inevitable as the Christian study of doctrine proper, or dogmatics." (145) Anthropology is important as the subject which Christian thought has in common in discussion with the non-believing world, and such discussion is necessary. (146) The "Christian doctrine of man must be beaten out on the anvil of continual argument with man's own view of himself." (147) However for Brunner as well as for Barth it is conversation from a position of knowledge of the truth, which is due to grace and

not to human achievement, and this is why the "outsider's" questions can never be answered unless he or she ceases to be an outsider: "Every theoretical understanding is in its very inception a misunderstanding"(148) and so science, for example, may assault faith but can never really refute it.(149)

#### God, Creation and Election

Brunner's doctrine of God is not unlike that of Barth's later works. God's nature, in Scripture, is not described only in itself, but is in relation to the created world.(150) God is the God who approaches humanity, as the human being is the one who comes from God.(151) Like Barth, Brunner is concerned to deny the "philosophical" conception of God which confuses his omnipotence with potestas absoluta, so that God becomes the sole reality which swallows up everything.(152) God's omnipotence is rooted in his nature as free and sovereign. Out of his unlimited freedom and sovereignty God creates, and as Creator he has absolute authority. His self-revelation is motivated by his wish to rule, though he communicates with us as if he needed us.(153) God's will and thought, the origin of all that exists, is revealed to us as love.(154) An emphasis which is, however, quite different from Barth is Brunner's emphasis on the dialectic within God between his holiness and his mercy, his wrath and his love. This dialectic is the decisive point of the Christian doctrine of God for Brunner. He describes God's wrath as "the inevitable necessary reaction of the will of God to all that opposes him". This reaction from God is necessary in order

for there to be order and seriousness in the world. Brunner sees rejection of the wrath of God as the beginning of the pantheistic disintegration of the idea of God. So Brunner says that "human guilt gains its infinity from God".(155) So within God there is a two-fold - and at first sight contradictory - movement of inclusion and expansion and exclusion and withdrawal.(156) This dialectic is one of asymmetry however. God is love, but it is never said that he is wrath. Wrath is his "strange" work, not his "own" work. This incongruity is the possibility of human decision. Another indication of the seriousness with which God treats human sin is his long-suffering, which is nothing less than the basis of history, as a breathing space or last chance for humanity(157): it is God's preservation.(158) For Barth God is wrathful, but this wrath is directed at Nothingness and at Christ as rejected, and it is not part of his attitude to humanity which is now redeemed.

Although Brunner makes a point of saying that creation ex nihilo means that God determines all, he is determined by none and is therefore not even determined by a "Nothing"(159), he does maintain that in creation God limits himself because of the independence granted to creation, and particularly to humanity as we noted above.

He limits Himself by the fact that the world over against Himself is a real existence. Hence the maximum of the divine self-limitation is equally the maximum of actual 'over-againstness' - the free



position of that being who is 'over-against' God, and is therefore able to answer the Word of the Creator in freedom.(160)

This self-limitation - which God is also of course free to remove, having first created it by his own will - is related to revelation. "He limits Himself, in order that a creature may have room alongside of Himself, in whom and to whom he can reveal and impart Himself."(161) This self-limitation is seen in the fact that though God's creation was good, it is no longer good, the existing order is not God's order, and in its distorted form, spoiled by sin, he does not will it.(162) Creation is the beginning of time, not a consequence of the fall.(163) That is, creation is not the solution, it is the beginning. Brunner sees the movement of the Christian "myth" as indispensable and as taking time absolutely seriously, unlike alternative myths, in its sequence of creation, fall, reconciliation and redemption.(164) As a narrative, Brunner suggests that the Adam myth should be abandoned, being the main source of determinism(165), but he consistently insists on its importance and meaning as essential to the Christian faith. It is necessary to maintain the distinction between human existence as created by God and that of the sinful human being, while retaining the reality of both.

The admittedly mythological, and therefore inadequate, conception of a fall is the only possibility of so bringing creation and sin into connexion without weakening either, and in some way making the contradiction in men innocuous. In this double qualification, 'created in God's image' and 'fallen and corrupted through sin' is included the whole anthropological and psychological knowledge of Christian faith.(166)

The fall is thus the clearest expression of the inexplicable character of sin, in the light of God's creation.(167) It can also be seen when God is revealed through the cross, i.e. when humanity's true origin becomes visible.(168) Brunner also interprets the serpent in the myth as meaning the prior existence of a force of temptation outside humanity. This means that human beings did not invent evil and that human sin always contains an element of frailty.

The significance of the above is enormous, and this is part of the real difference between Barth and Brunner. It means that for Brunner sin must be treated in every way as real. This in turn means that it is not possible or appropriate to speak of creation and election as one decree, they are not coterminous. Creation is subordinate to election so is neither co-ordinated with it nor super-ordinated above it.(169) The ideas of eternal decree are not applied to creation in the New Testament, Brunner argues. Both election and creation are mediated by Christ and in both cases Christ is not the subject. This means that election is in and through Christ, but not by Christ. (170) Brunner is once again concerned to safeguard the freedom of humanity, the possibility of an "Either-Or". If Jesus is the Elect, then there can be no rejection, then the decision for every human being is anticipated in Christ.

In Himself the Son signifies Election: where the Son is, there is Election; but where the Son is not, there is no election. But the Son is only present where there is faith... For this cause alone faith is

decisive in which the stakes are salvation or ruin...(171)

Brunner's understanding of the New Testament is that fore-ordination and freedom, predestination and responsibility are seen as truths necessarily and inseparably connected, and freedom is based on the fact of election.(172) Through the encounter of faith the word of historical calling becomes encounter with the eternal will of God, but this is not the same as the predestination of all, which "makes human history a mere game of chess."(173) Brunner sees this kind of predestination, in which the possibility of being lost is finally eliminated, as due to a mistaken emphasis on "Christ alone" and upon a misunderstanding of the theological passivity of sola gratia as involving psychological passivity. This criticism, although not specifically applied by Brunner, can be applied to Barth. Although eternal election - God's word of love from eternity through Christ - goes "before" human existence and decision as that which makes it possible this does not make that existence and decision futile. In the human being's free personal decision eternal destiny is realised as a temporal act. This is consistent with the nature of God who "always, while calling to faith, furthers the power of decision."(174) Human responsibility and thus humanness is therefore grounded in election, and when human beings turn away from God, his call to them is distorted but still exists and so they are still human.(175) Brunner also expresses this election as God allowing humanity to participate in his Being, his love and so as God giving us our human existence.(176)

This is Brunner's anthropology in more detail. Humanness and the human being's distinction within creation depend on God's call to humanity, no matter what the response to that call is. This call is part of the same divine will which created humanity in God's image which, although lost as content, remains as structure(177), so that human abilities are conditions for the realization of real human existence.(178) Because of humanity's calling human nature is identified with one's attitude to God, whether positive or negative.(179) Humanity must be seen in the light of both creation and sin(180), being as a sinner is still "being-in-the-Word-of-God."(181)

#### Redemption and the Incarnation

As with Barth, we gain complete knowledge of sin only from Christ.

To have a complete knowledge of the gulf would mean the knowledge that God has placed a bridge across the gulf. Perception of sin is not serious until we know that we can only be helped by the mediation which God Himself has provided. This, however, we only know when it happens. That this must happen first of all shows us where we are. Complete knowledge of sin is attained only in the Mediator.(182)

For Brunner the Incarnation is determined by sin, it is a new event not a pre-existent state, although Christ's sending and willingness to be sent are eternal.(183)

The purpose of the Incarnation refers rather to sinful fallen humanity and the creature than to the creature as such. The coming of the son into the world is not a coming into God's Creation, but into sinful creation. It is not the perfecting, but the restoration of creation. It is connected with closing the gulf which yawns not between the creature and the Creator, but between man who is sinful and a wrathful God.(184)

Thus the Incarnation means the contingency and uniqueness of revelation. The incomprehensible co-existence of the predicates God and humanity means the incomprehensible coming to us of the eternal God. "In this monstrosity of a God-man we know our own deformity, in this contradiction we see our contradiction, in this problem we see our own problem, the problem of humanity, evil, sin." (185) Whereas for Barth God contradicts our "contradiction" by his election in Christ and his rejection in Christ, for Brunner the paradox is dealt with by God's taking the "contradiction" into himself, and this also reveals that human sin is real.

Through him the antagonism has not only been overcome, but through him alone knowledge of the contradiction of sin itself is made possible and real.

This approach of God to man, this divine condescension, this entering into a world of sin and sinners burdened with their sense of contradiction to him, just this constitutes the mystery of divine revelation and reconciliation in the incarnate and crucified Christ. That God removes the contradiction by bearing it himself, this is the cross - Agnus Dei qui tollit peccata mundi. (186)

The cross is sacrifice and it achieves atonement and reconciliation. It is necessary because of God's wrath and the necessity of punishment. God's self-revelation, his coming and the atonement he achieves are one. The Mediator is in his person the bridge across the gulf between God and humanity. He is God's "assault" on the hostile world (187), and the cross and the resurrection are indispensable to his work and person, they are his highest revelation.

There, where Jesus went down into the depths for our sake, the revelation reaches its highest point, because God can only really meet man in the depths of humanity, because this depth of man is reality ... At

the point where Jesus completes His life He reveals these three things: the Reality of God as Holy and Merciful, the reality of man as sinner, and the genuine reality of man in God.(188)

Through the cross we know the divine love as that which enters the world in order to "tear" it out of its present accursed existence.(189) As such, the event of the cross means that suffering becomes a positive principle, and with the Incarnation we have the possibility of becoming human. The resurrection is the proof of the reality of redemption over wrath.(190)

#### Humanity and Sin

However the call of God which we hear at the cross does have a condition: "that we should hear it as the unconditional call that it is, that is, that we should believe."(191) We come back again to the reality of sin as a gulf between humanity and God, and to the significance of human decision. Sin is dealt with at one level in that Christ's work and person mean that humanity has the possibility of being truly human. However just as sin is on one level a free act, human repentance and belief are necessary for us to realise this possibility. Sin is essentially a paradoxical state, and this "contradiction" is the presupposition of the Christian message.(192) Its possibility lies in human freedom in self-determination, determining oneself against the determination of God.(193) Its most original form is therefore arrogance.(194) In sin human beings are tearing themselves away from their origins and this is one aspect of the paradox because human existence is always dependent on God even in alienation. So sin is "being human in an inhuman way."(195)

Sin therefore has the nature of a cleavage or rent through all existence(196), it results in a divided existence.(197) This paradox is characteristic of humanity's essence because the relation to God is determinative(198), and it is also self-chosen.(199) For Brunner it is part of humanity's created humanness that human beings can choose to sin and sin is always an act. "To be a sinner means: to be engaged in rebellion against God. Sin never becomes a quality or even a substance. Sin is and remains an act."(200) So human beings are fully responsible for sin.(201)

In the Bible sin is never anything other than a total act of the person namely, self-determination which is opposed to man's real destiny, disobedience to the will of God.(202)

However sin involves further paradox in that humanity becomes enslaved in its own emancipation from God(203), and this enslavement is corporate as well as individual. Sin is therefore fully personal but also unavoidable.(204) Again this is very like Ricoeur's "enslaved will" (see Chapter Five). It is this that leads Brunner to see sin as a fate, as well as a conscious decision and choice.

Thus the Biblical revelation recognises the fatal sense of the inevitable, the sense of Fate in evil; it calls us 'slaves of sin,' who have no free choice not to commit sin or not to be sinners; but it also recognises man's absolute responsibility, and does not attempt to ascribe it to some impersonal force in the form of a destiny...

Because sin is always concerned with God, it is an act... But at the same time, because it concerns God, the fact that this act takes place means that we 'can do nothing about' ... it is this inevitable combination of an 'act' and a 'state' which constitutes the depth of sin.(205)

A further aspect of paradox is that sin is negative and

positive. Brunner is concerned with the avoidance of evil by the modern mind which he characterises as Pelagian(206), and with the definition of sin as negative as a means of denying its reality.

... sin is that concept which finds a place in no system of thought. Every system thanks to its monistic tendency, must try to eliminate this sharpest of all contradictions... The usual procedure, if the problem is not ignored,... is the transformation of sin as evil into a negative magnitude.(207)

Sin is a negation, but it is a positive negation. "Man never sins purely out of weakness... Even in the dullest sinner there is still a spark of decision, of active positive negation which is not merely 'negative'."(208) However paradoxical its existence, sin is real, and therefore knowledge of God, to become actual, must be a real act of the human being just as it is a real act of God.(209) The decision is forced by the Incarnation, wherein Christ reveals the seriousness of the Divine Royal Will(210), but the decision is incontrovertibly humanity's and it is given weight by the fact of judgment.(211) "To take the past seriously as guilt, for which I am now responsible... which irrevocably determines my present existence, shows the seriousness of the decision, and thus shows the seriousness of irrevocable history."(212) A decision has been taken in Christ, the decision of forgiveness and acquittal, but the new beginning based on this decision is itself a decision: for Christ and the will of God.(213) The turning point is the human being, faith is always action, the existence of the decision(214), and because sin is real, rebirth is necessary, not only knowledge of the truth.(215) Yet again, there is



paradox here, because human freedom is affected by sin, and freedom of decision and inability to decide are both sides of human reality(216): human freedom is freedom for death.(217) Knowledge of sin and guilt is the "antechamber" of faith, its implied presupposition, "the act of standing before that gulf knowing quite well that it is utterly impossible for me to cross over; to be brought to the point where I despair of ever healing the wound of my existence in my own strength, or to bridge this gulf in my own power...".(218) Brunner has an understanding of freedom as Augustinian as Barth's, in that genuine freedom is freedom from the compulsion of sin and is thus based on faith(219); freedom is thus complete in dependence, and it is never to be understood as the human "leap" of faith, but as gift of God.(220) Indeed, faith is God's work and this is why it is successful, it is not our own act but is the act of the Holy Spirit.(221)

Faith only exists where a 'word' is accepted by the soul, or rather, where this 'word' captures the soul because it comes from God, and its truth is thus self-evident.(222)

Nevertheless the human decision is determinative. Human being as such is constituted by the fact of decision(223): human being is always a being-in-decision(224): "Man must stop on the way he is going and must turn around. Everything depends upon whether or not this happens."(225) The fact of human decision is thus a paradox because it is both the work of God and a personal act, "the only fully personal act", taking place within the personality as a whole. It is "self-knowledge, self-determination which springs from the deliberate acceptance

of one's life from the Hand of God. We have no right to attempt to remove this final paradox."(226)

This aspect of conflict is carried over into the life of the Christian which is the continual wrestling for and winning of faith from unbelief, because the believer is always also a sinner.(227) The ruin of sin still takes its course where the guilt is forgiven.(228) So although the Word of God is fulfilled in the Church, the fellowship of the called, - and particularly so in the corporate life of the Christian community(229) - although the redeemed human being has peace with God and freedom to serve him, which is the service of humanity, the real hope of the Christian is the future hope of the removal of death from life.

For if this were all the creation of God would remain rent, and the sovereignty of God limited... The restoration, the divine fulfilment, cannot be other than the removal of this disturbance (death) which has intruded into the created world and has set its seal wholly upon it.(230)

This is the redemption which is the final stage in the movement of the Christian "myth", "the conclusion of the possibility of decision by means of the actual removal of the contradiction".(231)

### CRITIQUE

The overwhelming and unavoidable emphasis of both Barth's and Brunner's theology from the point of view of this thesis is

their emphasis on sin as "contradiction". This seems not unnatural given the concern of both Barth and Brunner with the transcendence of God and his revelation, in the light of which sin is a paradoxical possibility, and their antagonism to the damaging "optimism" of the liberals, in the light of which sin must be allowed to affect one's view of humanity. As "dogmatic" theologians, both Barth and Brunner spend considerable time on the doctrines of sin and humanity and both take some account of Genesis in this respect. However both are concerned with the guiding of theology by revelation not by metaphysics or by "speculative" philosophy and they are not concerned with explanations of the origins of sin as such, but rather with its relationship to God's will for redemption in Christ and to the nature of humanity. Brunner is specifically concerned with sin rather than with evil, the latter being a more philosophical term. For Brunner this relates particularly to sin as human action, as personal and active.(232) Barth is concerned with sin, "the real sin of man", a personal act and guilt, but this is the most important form of Nothingness which is the larger category, the "fundamental phenomenon", and which also takes the form of real evil.(233) Barth and Brunner are happy to allow paradox, even contradiction, a place in their thought, because their aim is the elucidation of revelation which is transcendent, which is therefore inevitably at some point beyond human understanding(234), and which is authoritative whether we understand it fully or not; this is one of the characteristics indicated by the term "neo-orthodox". Both Barth and Brunner

reject the idea of a theological "system", which smacked of the liberal rationalism they opposed, and neither would be intimidated into the defence of orthodoxy or the need to explain paradox to the non-believer by means of human reason. However, within their broad mutual emphasis on sin as "contradiction" there is significant divergence between Barth and Brunner in the systematic location of the paradox and this has radical consequences for their respective doctrines of humanity, sin and redemption.

Barth analysed his differences with Brunner as coming back ultimately to the fact that Brunner distinguished, in a way he would not accept, between the Word of the Creator and the Lord of the Covenant.(235) This is the basis of their very different views of humanity. Whereas Brunner follows the sequence of creation, fall, reconciliation and redemption as events which are historically or temporally separate, Barth links creation so closely with election - which is in and by Christ and thus part of redemption - that the significance of creation is quite different. This has led to the criticism that Barth negates the Christian doctrine of creation to the point of omitting it entirely: a criticism which also relates to the limited extent of the discontinuity he allows between humanity and God.(236) This has again been linked with Barth's lack of concern with human growth, diversity and freedom of response of the individual. Barth's view seems to be that characterised by

Brunner (although not by name) as due to a mistaken emphasis on "Christ-alone", whereby God and Christ are absolutely equated and are together the subject of the actions of creation and election.(237) Creation is understood Christologically.(238)

The above means that Barth and Brunner give quite different place to the narrative of Genesis. Brunner's understanding of the Genesis "myth" is very close, as we shall see, to that of Ricoeur,(239) though he does not emphasise the anthropological nature of the myth as strongly as does Ricoeur, in terms of the responsibility of humanity for sin, this responsibility being founded for Brunner more on humanity's creation in God's image and its calling by God. He does however insist on the distinction between God's creation and the present sinful creation, a distinction which Ricoeur highlights as integral to the Christian myth and an important point of difference between the Christian and the non-Christian myths. Brunner also insists on the fall as the explanation of this distinction. He sees the serpent as significant in indicating that humanity is not the original source of evil; in Ricoeur's terms it points to the sense in which sin is fate as well as being personal. Brunner satisfies the requirements which Ricoeur understands as being necessary for a Christian doctrine of sin, encapsulated in "the enslaved will" and he does so by a very similar treatment of Genesis.

Brunner, then, emerges from our analysis as a dogmatic paradigm of the way in which we might apply Ricoeur's work theologically. His stance on the points which Ricoeur isolates as crucial accompany a theology which gives due weight to the doctrine of sin and its tensions, and which concomitantly gives human beings a genuine role. As such a paradigm Brunner indicates the potential of Ricoeur's work, and he becomes a foil in the following critique of Barth.

Barth's view of creation and the fall is very interesting in view of Ricoeur's analysis. As we noted (cf. p.95f) Barth takes significant account of Genesis 1-3 and sees Adam as typical of all humanity. However Genesis is not seen as an anthropological account of sin, as a fall due to humanity's free decision. The emphasis is on the fact, not the event of the fall. That is, Adam's fall represents not some disastrous event which changed or perverted the order of creation, but the state of fallenness of historical being. It is the fall which sets the stage for God's gracious dealings with human beings. It is thus, in a sense, the necessary presupposition of grace and redemption, rather than a contingent action of humanity; although Barth says that a human being is only "Adam" freely and responsibly, there is an unavoidable element of the tragic in that it is the fall which constitutes historical being, so that we will always and necessarily fail.

All this is, however, to be seen in the greater context of God's election in Christ and this dominant perspective causes ambiguity over whether or not humanity's state is the fallenness of all historical being or the elect and saved status of humanity in Christ, the second and true Adam. It is Barth's explanation of Nothingness which explores this ambiguity, and the link between this explanation and Genesis is in the overcoming of chaos(240): the formula as far as Nothingness is concerned is creation and chaos, rather than creation and fall or creation and evil, evil having more to do with the Incarnation, which is the prior factor.(241) The chaos myth is one of the types Ricoeur analyses as being destructive of the Christian myth. This chaos type, or the "theogonic" myth, is the myth Ricoeur sees as closest to the tragic myth where fault is indistinguishable from existence. In the chaos myth there is no place for the fall because the problem of evil is already resolved in the primordial conflict. There is no history of salvation as distinct from creation because creation is the overcoming of chaos, and thus it is salvation. The seduction of evil is thus the resurgence of this chaos.(242) While Barth obviously does not see chaos as anterior to order or the principle of evil as primordial and coextensive with divinity as does the Babylonian chaos myth, his language is reminiscent of this myth as he talks of creation as God confirming and upholding the separation between His creature and nothingness(243), and of chaos as the antithesis which claims humanity as its victim.(244) This resembles the language of the

Babylonian chaos myth more than the Christian doctrine of creation. Ricoeur explains the attraction for Christian theology of a "learned theogony" (for which evil is an original element of being) as a way of coping with the tragic which is invincible at the level of humanity and unthinkable at the level of God. A learned theogony makes tragedy both invincible and intelligible by locating it, as Barth does, at the origin of things, and by making it coincide with a logic of being, by means of negativity.(245) This seems to me to be the trap in which Barth finds himself. There is no question that Barth sees sin as effective at the level of human beings' ordinary lives, and his analysis of the sinner's concealment of sin is very astute. He talks about the reality-forming power of sin and wants to deny that sin is merely nothing(246): it is a "yawning abyss" between humanity and God.(247) However there is still ambiguity in Barth's thought about the reality of sin because of its unthinkable nature at the level of God. With this precarious status of sin, wavering between the poles of reality at the level of human beings and unreality at the level of God, Barth does indeed seek intelligibility in his myth of the beginning, a search such as that for which he censured Müller (cf. Appendix A p.333f) and with similarly unsatisfactory results.

Barth's explanation of the existence and nature of sin in terms of Nothingness fails on various grounds. Firstly, a



beginning-myth which speaks of God overcoming chaos is unChristian. We have noted the similarities between what Barth says and the Babylonian chaos myth (as Ricoeur describes the latter). Any such explanation by a Christian theologian must be justified, which Barth does not undertake to do, and must be seen in relation to the biblical myth, which should be normative. Ricoeur for his part insists that the interrelationships between the myths are necessary, but they are also fundamentally iconoclastic of one another.

Secondly, Barth's explanation of Nothingness has unacceptable concomitants in his theology. It makes existence tragic in that the human being has no choice in relation to Nothingness, but is subject to it.(248) This is similar to Brunner's understanding of enslavement, but without the counterbalance of responsibility which Brunner maintains. Barth, as Ricoeur says, makes the tragic coincide with a logic of being. Barth is here open to his own criticism of Leibnitz's concept of Nothingness.(249) This thought also has strange implications for redemption, which thus becomes the repetition, albeit in a louder voice, of God's initial "No" to Nothingness declared in creation, this second "No" actually routing Nothingness. Barth's reaction to the obvious question as to how Nothingness can assail God if he has already negated it, is that "we must not pursue this thought to its logical end."(250) It is not clear why the possibility of Nothingness resisting God's

rejection is any more acceptable, or at least more intelligible, to Barth than human resistance to God's creation.

Thirdly, Barth's explanation of the existence of Nothingness only leads to confusion and further ambiguity.(251) Whereas the determinate nature of God and of creation is "straightforward determinacy" which implies nothing about Nothingness, and the determinacy of God and of the creature as distinct beings is good and legitimate, the determinate nature of God's creative act per se, as an act of election, gives reality to that which is thereby rejected: chaos and Nothingness thus have evil and powerful reality. So at certain points the determinacy of creation is not good, but has dire consequences. This explanation is not justified by Barth, and it is not clarified by his explanation that Nothingness occupies some third plane of reality, the other two planes being the existence of that which exists and the non-existence of that which does not exist. By removing Nothingness to this strange third realm Barth makes this explanation unfalsifiable: it has roots neither in the realm of human knowledge and experience nor in Christian theology. Barth also gives no explanation of how something existing in such a plane can have effect on the "ordinary" plane of existence. The inexplicable nature of sin is neither explained nor resolved by this explanation of Nothingness.

Barth's work on Nothingness thus seems to be a cul-de-sac as far as the problem of sin is concerned, leaving us with the question of whether or not sin is real for Barth. This problem is, however, given further resolution by the wider context of Barth's thought. The human being, as we saw, although he or she does sin, cannot sin. Sin is an ontological impossibility, its very existence is as something already defeated. For Barth the paradox of sin is something external to humanity: this is crucial. Sin is God's problem, rather than humanity's, and God has dealt with the problem. For Brunner, on the other hand, the paradox is essentially internal. Human existence (not sin's) is as "contradiction". The paradoxical nature of sin is thus given broader scope within Brunner's theology which gives, I believe, a more satisfactory view of humanity. This is another focus of the issue between Barth and Brunner. Brunner criticises Barth's understanding of "real man" the "leading idea of Barthian anthropology" as irreconcilable with the Christian doctrine of sin. "Real" humanity is, for Barth, "true" humanity, i.e., the humanity of the covenant, redeemed humanity, and the sinner seems to be shunted into the same strange third sphere of being as Nothingness.(252) Those features incompatible with Barth's view of "real" humanity, Christologically determined, can be excised as ipso facto non-human(253), and Barth's view of humanity also thus becomes unfalsifiable in relation to the empirical sciences, which may offer knowledge of the symptoms of "real" humanity, recognisable as such only a posteriori, but which can do no more than this. This issue is seen also in

Barth's criticism of Brunner for his concern only with the phenomena of the human being rather than with "real humanity". Barth demands the specific content of "freedom", i.e., reception of God's revelation, and not the mere form of potentiality for revelation.(254)

Barth emphasises humanity's inability and its role as determined from above to such an extent that real humanity in Brunner's sense, human beings as they are and experience themselves to be, sinful human beings, are lost. They no longer exist as such, they have no "truth" of their own but are lost in God's truth.(255) It is this view of humanity which leads to the criticism that salvation is noetic for Barth, that is, because a human being is saved, he or she merely needs to know this fact.(256) As Wingren says, for Barth "the decisive factor is that the man into whose world God enters through a birth and through the written word is a man without knowledge of God, a man without contact with God."(257)

The other implication of all the above is that of universalism. Barth's thought seems, unavoidably, to mean that all people are ultimately saved, because all are incorporated in Christ's rejection by God as sinful and in his acceptance by God as elect. Barth himself is not afraid of this charge, although he states neither acceptance nor rejection of it, but he asserts

that the question of universalism is not the right question: rather we should be concerned with the loving kindness of God.(258)

So it seems that Barth's non-inclusion of the anthropological implications of the Genesis myth and his effective abandonment of the real historical or temporal movement of creation, fall, reconciliation and redemption leads to an unsatisfactory view of sin itself, and a view of humanity which is not adequate in the light of human beings' experience of themselves as guilty and responsible, and in the light of the emphasis of Scripture on the human being as a sinner in real rebellion against and alienation from God. The question is ultimately removed from humanity's sphere of operation.

In his efforts to locate and explain the paradox which sin is, Barth uses contradictory language. God's non-willing gives Nothingness "the truth of falsehood, the power of impotence, the sense of non-sense and the possibility of the impossible", and these "attributes" are accorded it on the left hand of God and withdrawn from it in God's victory on his right hand.(259) In ordinary conversation such use of language would be seen as nonsense, and yet it does express an important insight into the paradoxical nature of sin as a reality in the light of God's goodness and his power in creation and redemption. However, as

we have seen, Barth's locating of sin wholly outside of humanity, and its determination by his emphasis on God's electing salvation in Christ make the reality of sin finally dubious. The real import of this contradictory language is thus ambiguous. It is sin's very existence, not its nature which is seen as paradoxical by Barth. For Brunner the conflict is allowed greater range and significance and is centred largely in human nature affecting human nature and existence as well as affecting God's attitude to human beings and their actions.

Both Barth and Brunner deny that sin can be systematised - i.e. given a consistent and coherent place within theology as a whole - which is hardly surprising after their description of sin as "contradiction".(260) However Barth does seem to attempt, in practice, to systematise sin because of his presuppositions about the effectiveness of God's will in Christ, and these fences limit the meaning of sin in an unacceptable way. A development of Ricoeur's understanding of the symbolism of sin could provide safeguards against the dangers we have seen illustrated in Barth's thought. Understanding sin as a "tensive" symbol(261) involving the essential paradox of inevitability and freedom means that, like Brunner, we can accept the presence of the paradox not as something to be explained but as part of the inexplicable meaning of sin. Incorporating an understanding of the distinctive, anthropological nature of the Adamic myth into our

exposition of sin would, furthermore, ensure that this paradox is seen as internal to, constitutive of, humanity. That is, it is not a paradox which lies only between God and sin or God and humanity but it also lies within humanity. This means that human existence cannot be seen as fateful because freedom is affirmed. Exploration of the breadth of the meaning of sin as symbol - its polysemic, tensive nature and its incorporation of a complex group of ideas - would also guard against overemphasis on only one aspect, such as the inexplicability of sin, which should be balanced by similar emphasis on its reality.

This kind of application of Ricoeur will be considered further in Chapter Six(pp.282f) but we can see already what such an application might involve in Brunner's work. Brunner is prepared to accept the real paradox and tension of sin. He sees no need to explain the existence of the paradox as such and is more concerned to insist on the reality of those factors which constitute the tension - human freedom and God's determination - and on the existential implications for humanity; factors which he derives from creation and the fall narrative, from salvation and from human nature. The result is a theology which not only gives greater significance to sin, and thus has more chance of relating to the experience of human beings who are sinners, but also relates to a more satisfying doctrine of redemption which is the powerful response and solution to a powerful threat. To conclude in Brunner's words,

We must absolutely resist the inclination to draw 'logical conclusions', since they only lead to one of two errors: either to the doctrine of the double decree or to the doctrine of universal salvation, each of which removes the reality of the decision of faith. Only the renunciation of the logically satisfying theory creates room for true decision; but the Gospel is the Word which confronts us with the summons to decision.(262)



### CHAPTER THREE FOOTNOTES

1. D. Kelsey, The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology, p.3.  
Cf. Chapter One, p.21.
2. Evangelical Theology, p.12 (Ev.T)
3. The Divine Imperative, p.84. (D.I.)
4. Cf. the various analyses in Karl Barth-Studies of his Theological Method, ed. S.W. Sykes. Also Torrance, who sees Christology as the central factor in the later Barth, Karl Barth : An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910-1931.
5. Cf. Wingren's formula for Barth's theology : "the knowledge of God which man lacks he receives from Scripture, i.e. from Christ". Theology in Conflict : Nygren, Barth, Bultmann.
6. Church Dogmatics (CD) II/1, 26, p.187ff.
7. CD II/1, 26, p.68 Cf. also p.76ff.
8. CD II/1. 27. p.198.
9. The Christian Life, p.88, para.76.
10. CD II/, 25, p.22f.
11. *ibid.* p.31ff.
12. CD II/1, 26, p.28.
13. The Christian Life (CL), p.121f.
14. CD II/1, 26, p.139f.
15. S. Sykes, "Barth on the Centre of Theology", in Karl Barth - Studies of his Theological Method, p.51f.
16. CD III/2, 43, p.19f.
17. CD II/1, 25, p.43.
18. Torrance, p.165.
19. *ibid.*

20. CD II/1, 26, p.107.
21. CD III/2, 43, p.29.
22. The Humanity of God, p.11. (HG)
23. CD III/2, 43, p.22ff.
24. CD III/2, 44, p.90 & p.126.
25. HG, p.24f.
26. CD II/1, 25 p.1.
27. Basic Questions in Theology II, p.199ff. He goes on to argue, in Theological Anthropology, that by beginning with God himself and by rejecting anthropology Barth has in fact unwittingly adopted the most extreme form of theological subjectivism, p.16f.
28. HG, p.18.
29. CD II/1, 25, p.37.
30. Dogmatics in Outline, (DO) p.35ff.
31. DO, p.48.
32. HG, p.45.
33. *ibid* and ff.
34. The Gift of Freedom, p.71.
35. CD III/1, 40, p.25f.
36. *ibid.* p.18.
37. DO, p.50.
38. CD III/1, 40, p.14f.
39. CD IV/1, 57, p.22ff.
40. DO p.52. Barth also says that God as Creator is hidden in creation because of sin. Cf. note 9 above.
41. CD III/2, 43, p.1ff.
42. CL p.142.
43. HG, p.53.

44. CD III/2, 43, p.4.
45. *ibid.*
46. CD II/2, 35, p.321.
47. CD III/2, 43, p.43.
48. CD III/2, 44, p.72ff.
49. CL, p.19f, 21f.
50. CD IV/1, 58, p.81f.
51. CD III/2, 44, p.197.
52. CD III/3, 50, p.292, the reference is to Nothingness.
53. CD III/2, 44, p.197.
54. HG, p.60.
55. CD IV/1, 57, p.42.
56. DO, p.69. Cf. CD IV/1, 57, p.8 & p.46.
57. CD IV/1, 57, p.37f.
58. *ibid.*
59. CD III/2, 54, p.32f.
60. CD II/2, 35, p.350ff. "He is the Rejected, as and because He is the Elect. In view of His election, there is no other rejected but Himself.", p.353.
61. DO, p.106f.
62. CD IV/1, 58, p.94f.
63. CD III/2, 50, p.312.
64. CD IV/1, 58, p.94f.
65. CD III/2, 44, p.132.
66. DO, p.88.
67. DO, p.91.
68. CD III/2, 44, p.136.
69. CD II/2, 35, p.350ff.

70. CD III/2, 44, p.119.
71. CD III/2, 43, p.32.
72. CL, p.15.
73. CD II/2, 39, p.764.
74. CL, p.158.
75. CD II/2, 39, p.753.
76. CD III/2, 43, p.42,48.
77. The Gift of Freedom, p.73.
78. CD IV/1, 57, p.25.
79. CD III/2, 43, p.32.
80. CD II/2, 35, p.307.
81. CD III/2, 43, p.32ff.
82. CD II/2, 35, p.390f. cf. IV/1, 57, p.46.
83. CD II/2, p.141ff. Cf. B. Milne, "The Idea of Sin in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth".
84. DO, p.121.
85. CD II/2, 39, p.766.
86. CD III/2, 44, p.176ff. Barth describes the fatal split in all existence as that between knowledge and ignorance of God, righteousness and sin, CL, p.164f.
87. DO, p.134.
88. DO, p.15ff.
89. CL, p.146.
90. *ibid*, p.43.
91. *ibid*, p.193f.
92. *ibid*, p.33.
93. The Gift of Freedom, p.73ff, cf. DO, p.56.
94. CL, p.172.

95. *ibid*, p.78.
96. *ibid*, p.142.
97. *ibid*, p.212.
98. p.116f.
99. CL, p.211.
100. *ibid*, p.125,134,148f.
101. *ibid*, p.125.
102. CD III/3, 50, p.305.
103. *ibid*, p.296f.
104. Again, this is very reminiscent of Augustine's view of creation.
105. On saga and Genesis 1-3 cf. CD I/1, p.374f; II/2, p.141f; III/1, p.81f, 210ff, 356f; IV/1, p.507ff & DO, p.50ff.
106. CD I/1, p.375f, cf. B. Milne, "The Idea of Sin in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth", p.76ff & 307ff.
107. CD I/1, p.378. It is tempting to apply this description of myth to Barth's own work on Nothingness.
108. "'It was very good' means concretely that it was adapted to the purpose which God had in view; adapted to be the external basis of His covenant of grace." CD III/1, p.263.
109. CD IV/1, p.511.
110. CD III/1, p.262.
111. CD II/2, p.752.
112. It is interesting to note an earlier instance of this sort of argument in C.E. Rolte (The World's Redemption, London 1913), to whom Moltmann refers in The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. Moltmann sees very good sense in his "bold thesis that evil does not exist because God created it; it exists just because he refused to create it."
113. CD III/3, p.290.
114. CD III/3, 50, p.352.
115. p.327.

116. DO, p.57f.
117. p.305.
118. CD III/3, 50, p.356.
119. CD IV/1, 58, p.150ff.
120. CL, p.214.
121. *ibid*, p.125.
122. *ibid*, p.124.
123. CL, p.148.
124. CD III/3, 50, p.356.
125. CL, p.211. Cf, however, my criticism (below) on Barth's explanation of sin within a logic of being, which involves a tragic view of existence.
126. CD III/3, 50, p.356.
127. CL, p.234, 252.
128. Dogmatics (Dg) I, p.43ff.
129. The Divine-Human Encounter (DHE), p.47.
130. The Mediator (M), p.209.
131. DHE, p.46.
132. *ibid*, p.48.
133. M, p.334.
134. Dg.II, p.22ff.
135. Cf. Colin Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message, p.52.
136. Dg.II, p.24.
137. *ibid*, p.22f.
138. Dg.I, p.134.
139. Dg.II, p.20.
140. M, p.468.

- 141. Dg.II, p.53.
- 142. p.82ff.
- 143. God and Man, p.167.
- 144. *ibid.*
- 145. Dg.I, p.6.
- 146. Dg.II, p.46f.
- 147. Man in Revolt (MR), p.76.
- 148. Theology in Conflict, p.37.
- 149. M, p.179.
- 150. Dg.I, p.247.
- 151. DHE, p.44.
- 152. Dg.I, p.249.
- 153. M, p.550.
- 154. MR, p.9.
- 155. M, p.443.
- 156. Dg.I, p.161 and ff.
- 157. Dg.I, p.274.
- 158. The Divine Imperative (DI) p.130.
- 159. Dg.II, p.10.
- 160. Dg.II, p.20.
- 161. Dg.I, p.251.
- 162. DI, p.126.
- 163. Dg.II, p.14f.
- 164. M, p.387.
- 165. MR, p.88.
- 166. God and Man, p.153, cf. Dg.II, p.51,74.
- 167. MR, p.144.

- 168. DI, p.76.
- 169. Dg.I, p.309.
- 170. Dg.I, p.314.
- 171. *ibid.*
- 172. *ibid*, p.312.
- 173. Dg.I, p.306.
- 174. DE, p.91.
- 175. God and Man, p.115ff.
- 176. MR, p.78.
- 177. MR, p.170.
- 178. MR, p.74.
- 179. *ibid*, p.482.
- 180. DI, p.62.
- 181. MR, p.67.
- 182. M, p.150.
- 183. M, p.291, 311. cf. Dg.I, p.347.
- 184. M, p.314.
- 185. *ibid*, p.406.
- 186. Theology in Conflict, p.57,60. cf. Dg.I, p.273, Dg.II, p.184.
- 187. M, p.553.
- 188. Dg.II, p.280f.
- 189. DI, p.130.
- 190. M, p.580 and ff.
- 191. Dg.I, p.311.
- 192. MR, p.114.
- 193. God and Man, p.156.



194. DI, p.488, cf. p.70f.
195. MR, p.456.
196. DI, p.62, cf. M, p.146.
197. MR, p.167.
198. Theology in Conflict, p.57.
199. DI, p.154, 170f, cf. DHE, p.97ff.
200. MR, p.148.
201. DHE, p.98.
202. MR, p.254.
203. DI, p.170.
204. M, p.147.
205. MR, p.117, Dg.II, p.109, cf. DI, p.155.
206. M, p.122ff, 138.
207. God and Man, p.63.
208. MR, p.130.
209. God and Man, p.64.
210. M, p.586.
211. MR, p.443.
212. MR, p.441. cf. M, p.443 - our sinful past is that which  
can never be made good.
213. ibid, and cf. Dg.I, p.306ff.
214. M, p.584f.
215. DHE, p.109.
216. DHE, p.99.
217. MR, p.271.
218. M, p.299.
219. Dg.I, p.313.

220. M, p.301, 339, cf. God and Man, p.156.
221. DI, p.284f.
222. M, p.220.
223. DI, p.27.
224. MR, p.148.
225. DE, p.108.
226. DI, p.161.
227. DI, p.80.
228. M, p.569f.
229. This emphasis on the corporate nature of sin and of the Church is a very important aspect of Brunner's thought.
230. M, p.570.
231. M, p.388.
232. "Sin, however, is a concept connoting personal action, active personality... Only when sin is defined as guilt is evil comprehended in its personal form", Theology in Conflict, p.54f.
233. "...as something wholly anomalous which threatens and imperils this existence and is no less inconsistent with it than sin itself, as the preliminary experience of an absolutely alien factor which is radically opposed to the sense and purpose of creation and therefore to the Creator Himself.", CD III/3, p.310 and 306ff.
234. Cf. Kierkegaard's view of the unavoidable refraction into antimony of the Word of God when passed into human speech and ideas. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.234.
235. CD III/2, p.128ff.
236. Cf. R.D. Williams, "Barth on the Triune God", in Karl Barth, ed. S.W. Sykes, p.180f: Perhaps the most fundamental trouble is that Barth... has as little of a doctrine of creation as has Hegel. For Hegel God and the World are entirely continuous, for Barth, entirely discontinuous." Williams talks of the "absence", in Barth, of a doctrine of creation, "as opposed to a doctrine of the infinite gulf between the creator and the created."
237. Dg.I, p.314ff.

238. T.F. Torrance isolates Christology as the key factor in Barth's later work, and S.W.Sykes argues that Barth ends up subordinating the content of his theology to his Christology. T.F. Torrance, Karl Barth. An Introduction, S. W. Sykes, "Barth on the Centre of Theology", in Karl Barth. Cf. also C. Brown, Karl Barth and the Christian Message, who sees sin as impossible for Barth because of his christocentricity, p.136.
239. P. Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil, cf. Chapter One p.13f above and Chapter Five.
240. CD III/3, 50, p.352ff.
241. Dogmatics in Outline, p.103. For Barth this does not necessarily mean temporally later than creation or fall.
242. The Symbolism of Evil, p.175ff.
243. CD III/3, 50, p.290.
244. Nothingness is "the unwilled and uncreated reality which constitutes as it were the periphery of His creation and creature. It is that which, later depicted in very suitable mythological terms and conceptions, is antithetical both to God Himself and to the world of heaven and earth which He selected, willed and created. It is the horrible perversion which opposes God and tempts and threatens His creature... And all the subsequent history of the relationship between God and His creature is marked by the fact that man is the sinner who has submitted and fallen a victim to chaos." CD III/3, 50, p.352.
245. The Symbolism of Evil, p.327.
246. MR, p.158.
247. CD IV/1, p.82.
248. cf. CD III/2, p.146f.
249. "Those who, like Leibnitz, convert Nothingness into something positive... need not be surprised if they can perceive and understand what is really positive only in the strange relativity to Nothingness..." CD III/3, p.315f.
250. CD III/3, p.356f.
251. We have noted that Barth censures Müller for such an attempt to go beyond the mystery of sin. Cf. Appendix A, p.333, also cf. Ricoeur's warnings, Chapter Six, p.329.
252. "'Real' here seems thus not to have its usual meaning but rather what we would express by the word 'true man' ... it

is said that the sinner - and according to our usage that would be real man - is man who has 'missed his reality'. ... But surely it is the sinner that God is 'for', for the man we actually are as sinners. In this case real man cannot be man of God's good creation... At one moment real man is man who fulfils the purpose of God in creation. At another moment real man is man as he in fact exists, i.e., sinful man...", "The New Barth", p.126.

253. S. MacLean, Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth, makes this criticism, p.33, 96f.

254. CD III/2, p.128ff.

255. "As (the biblical witnesses) proclaim God's revelation to man they must claim man himself as the man already objectively changed by the event of revelation. They do not consider taking man in the cosmos seriously and addressing him in his 'nature' - which really means in his self-understanding. Rather they say to him that he no longer exists as such; that in his self-understanding he now exists only in one monstrous misunderstanding... According to God's revelation, their source and end, he has already lost his own truth, his own being in the good pleasure of God. Therefore they point to his truth as in and with this same revelation of God... It has already broken in upon him and mastered him as his original and future truth, alien, transcendent, and irresistible." CD II/1, p.111ff.

It is this strand of Barth's thought which has led commentators to deny Barth's own claim to have left behind him the Kierkegaardian existentialist framework of absolute discontinuity between God and humanity. MacLean, op.cit., p.1ff.

256. cf. p.91f above.

257. Theology in Conflict, p.115. R. Roberts makes the criticism that "the result of the surpassing completeness of the redemptive activity of God in Christ means that the path to salvation becomes ... a merely noetic realization", "Barth and Time", in Karl Barth, ed. S.W. Sykes. R.D. Williams claims that this means Barth's thought is ultimately anthropocentric because he is thus concerned with human knowledge, rather than God's activity, "Barth on the Triune God", in Karl Barth, ed. S.W. Sykes, p.173ff.

258. "...we have no theological right to set any sort of limits to the loving-kindness of God which has appeared in Jesus Christ. Our theological duty is to see and understand it as being still greater than we had seen before." HG, p.61f. Cf. C. Brown, op.cit., p.136, and J. Macquarrie, "The Anthropological Approach to Theology", who concludes

that both Barth and Rahner see all humanity as saved, whether or not they are conscious of the fact. NB elsewhere Barth does reject universalism, CD II/2, p.417-8. Cf. Chapter 6 p.300ff.

259. CD III/3, p.363. "If they (human abilities apart from God - the lordless powers) are only pseudo-objective realities, strangely enough they are still powerful realities which make a fine display of their lying objectivity."
260. CD III/3, p.354, God and Man, p.63.
261. Cf. Chapter 5, p.273ff and Chapter 6, p.282ff below.
262. Dg.I, p.353.

CHAPTER FOURKARL RAHNER AND WOLFHART PANNENBERG

In our examination of the doctrine of sin in the theologies of Karl Rahner and Wolfhart Pannenberg - and so broadly of their theologies as such - the question of the role of theological anthropology has a significance and centrality which both men emphasised. In both cases this emphasis is partly a reaction against a theology such as Barth's which, in stressing God's transcendence in a particular way, reduces humanity's role and significance to a level which is seen as unacceptably low. This emphasis alone could well be enough to justify my combination of Rahner and Pannenberg in this chapter. However they also have in common a metaphysical approach to theology characterised by concern with the nature of reality and particularly transcendent reality, in opposition to the Kantian embargo on the consideration of reality other than the empirical and phenomenal, and in opposition to subjectivism in theology; and a concern with humanity's knowledge of this reality, the possibility of this knowledge and the method by which it is attained. Because of this metaphysical stance, the significance of sin within this 'type' of theology may be related to these epistemological and methodological concerns.

However, Rahner and Pannenberg come to quite different answers to these questions about reality and knowledge and

although they come to some similar conclusions and share some tendencies there are as many, arguably greater, differences in their thought; they cannot be incorporated under one "label" or title to the same extent as Barth and Brunner.

#### KARL RAHNER

Rahner, like Barth and Brunner, designates himself from the start as a "Christian" theologian, whose task is "ecclesial" theology; i.e., a theology which remains "within the Church's reflection on the Word of God", which questions and reflects on the "whole truth of man" which is already always given, and which is present in the Church's confession.(1) However this "old basic substance of the faith" must be expressed in new ways in order adequately to confront the modern, non-Christian milieu and this "transposition" of faith will require a pluralism of theologies because of the pluralism of present and future horizons of understanding: this pluralism of theology being related still and necessarily to Roman Catholic teaching which is the principle of continuity.(2)

#### Revelation and Knowledge of God

The necessity for transposition of theology into the world follows from Rahner's understanding of revelation as God's self-communication with humanity and thus as humanity's fulfilment(3), which takes place in and through humanity itself. Essential to this is the presupposition of God's relationship to

the world as being one of both transcendence and immanence.(4) This relationship, like revelation, is perpetual because God is the living, perpetual ground of the world's movement and of humanity's being, and "revelation" is the highest degree of this principle.(5) Revelation thus has two aspects corresponding to the world's movement and to humanity's being: it is a "historical mediation and conceptual objectification" of an existential and transcendent determination and experience, taking place in history and constituting in its totality the whole of history: it is the permanently operative and gracious existential itself which constitutes humanity's transcendence. As we shall see Rahner's idea of revelation is determinative not only for humanity but also for sin. History is thus the history of God's self-communication both in specific historical occurrences, ultimately and absolutely in Christ's history, as also in God's Word - created utterance concerning God, and in humanity's transcendental determination: it is thus God's history as well as - indeed in the fact of being - humanity's history. This is why theology is the explication of a truth which is already present, "for the whole truth of man as opposed to partial questions and answers must always already be given if it is always to be questioned and found."(6)

#### Theological Anthropology

Humanity is the locus of revelation, for the human being finds knowledge of God only in and through knowledge of him or herself as a transcendent being.(7) So, Rahner argues, theology must be



anthropology. He gives three reasons why theology must be anthropology and these illuminate his view of humanity and of theology as such.(8)

1. Theology must be anthropology from the case itself, because of the very process of knowing.
2. Theology must be anthropology because of the contemporary situation.
3. Theology must be anthropology because this is necessary for basic theological formulations and for apologetics.

Firstly Rahner is claiming that a theological anthropology is unavoidable because of the nature of theology which, as an intellectual enterprise always raises the question of the subject. The "transcendent and limitless horizon" presupposed in humanity by its quest for knowledge - even on the most mundane level - is not only the only possible basis for understanding such a concept as "God" but itself points beyond to God as its absolute reference point. Theology must always be interested in the question of the knowing subject because: a. as a philosophical discipline it is concerned with the whole of reality. b. as a theological discipline it is concerned by definition with God who, as the fundamental ground of all reality, can only be understood as the absolute point of humanity's transcendent orientation, i.e., as what "makes" the human being subject. The human knower as the questioner is at the centre of the process of knowing. In self-knowledge the

subject possesses both its knowledge and itself - Aquinas' reditio completa the return to self of the subject in a "co-known unthematic self-presence". This is because being and knowing constitute an original unity:

The original meaning of knowing is self-possession, and being possesses itself to the extent that it is being... the essence of being is to know and to be known in an original unity which we call the (knowing) self-presence of being.(9)

This unity of self and knowledge is vital for Rahner's thought. It is the ultimate presupposition of the communication of the ultimate being - God - "pure being in its divinity" to humanity: this is in essence Rahner's understanding of the analogy of being. Analogy, in talk about God, is valid because transcendence is the more original term, it is the ground of the categorical and the categorical can therefore be used, analogically, to designate the transcendent Mystery. Such use is an indication of humanity's link with Mystery, not of distance from it, and it signifies what is most basic and original in our knowledge, and what is thus most basic and original to humanity. Analogy is "the tension between a categorical starting point and the incomprehensibility of the holy mystery, namely God".(10) The tension exists because being is "somewhat discontinuous": that to which humanity is related is also "other".(11)

In this self-consciousness of the knowing subject - also in the subject's openness to reality - which is a transcendent

experience there is an unthematic and anonymous knowledge of God, an experience "in which he whom we call 'God' encounters humanity in silence as the absolute and the incomprehensible, as the term of its transcendence which cannot be incorporated into any system of co-ordinates." (12) This original, unthematic, unreflexive knowledge of God is pointed to by our reflective talk of God which is thus a posteriori and analogous. This train of thought is a clear example of Rahner's transcendental method whereby his reflection on the performance of questioning and knowledge leads him to assertions about the conditions of possibility of such knowledge. Further to this, the unthematic knowledge of being present in the act of knowledge is itself the possibility of metaphysics for the human intellect, which thus starts in the very performance of the question of the possibility. (13)

The transcendent orientation of human existence is also revealed by the possibility of human judgments which posit an object over against the subject and which affirm universal quiddity of such sensible, particular objects. (14)

And this grasping of the single subject under the concept (the knowledge of the object as possessing the universal quiddity mentioned by the statement's predicate) is but the other side of what we have called the self-subsistence in knowledge of the knowing human subject. (15)

The condition of possibility of such knowledge, of the universal concept or abstraction, is the Vorgriff, the anticipation, the "reaching for more" which accompanies humanity's awareness or

suspicion of the limitation of the particular object, making the human being "conscious by opening up the horizon within which the single object of human knowledge is known." (16) The Vorgriff is a denial of the finite as it reveals its own finiteness, by reaching beyond all the finite towards being as such, in its essential infinity: the Vorgriff aims at God. This is humanity's fundamental openness to being, its constitution as spirit, and it is the condition of possibility of all knowledge. In less philosophical terms this involves humanity's awareness of its finiteness in its continual questioning and in the ever-receding horizon of that questioning. This sort of transcendent subjectivity is severely criticised by Barth and Pannenberg, among others. We will see later that it has serious and questionable implications for sin.

Such, then, is the basis of Rahner's metaphysical anthropology:

Man is spirit and, as such, he always already stands before the infinite God who, as infinite, is always more than only the ideal unity of the essentially finite powers of human existence and of the world. He does not only acknowledge God in fact, but in the daily drift of his existence he is man, self-subsistent, capable of judgments and of free activity only because he continually reaches out into a domain that only the fulness of God's absolute being can fill. (17)

However the fact that this unobjective knowledge of God is an a priori condition of human knowledge means that objective knowledge of God is impossible; knowledge of God must always be indirect, analogous and inadequate. Knowledge of God is found

through knowledge of oneself, and so the theologian invites the Christian and the non-Christian to listen to this "process of self-questioning" in the hope that both will be able to make it their own.(18) We should note here however that this process is an anthropologia negativa because the ground of being which humanity encounters within itself and its knowledge is incomprehensible.

Arguments 2 and 3 in Rahner's case for theological anthropology are so closely linked that I will look at them together. Rahner's overriding concern is that theology should be related to humanity in theological and anthropological germs. The human being is the point of reference for the illumination of theology, there must be continuity between dogma and experience, for theological and apologetic reasons. Theologically the human being is central as the beneficiary of salvation and as the questioning subject in the theological task. Rahner points out that if theology is "salvation" theology it must be to do with the human being who needs saving. "Everything of significance for salvation is to be illuminated by referring it back to this transcendent being." Theology is to be "investigated by enquiring at the same time as to man's saving receptivity for the object."(19) Rahner explicates what this means in practice with reference to such doctrines as Trinity, Grace and Incarnation, each fundamentally requiring a "transcendental" approach, i.e. needing to be seen from the

point of view of the subject's relationship to God. Without such understanding these doctrines are for Rahner at the "pre-theological" stage of proclamation, picture-language", "mythology".

The theological necessity for humanity's centrality is also tied up with analogy. If the very possibility of understanding Mystery is grounded in humanity's transcendence, in its relation to Mystery and continuity with it, then theological statements should be comprehensible to human beings as they experience themselves to be.

Apologetically the need for a link between dogma and experience is inescapable, particularly because of the contemporary situation of "hominisation" in the world.(20) Rahner shares Pannenberg's concern with the anthropocentrism of modern society, science, philosophy etc., which he claims sprang originally out of the Christian view of humanity and is still profoundly Christian in seeing humanity as the subject of freedom, the centre in whom the world becomes God's own history. However, humanity has become almost its own creator and God, and is thus profoundly anti-Christian. Again Rahner is close to Pannenberg in seeing this as the challenge for theology because humanity's ultimate dependence (openness, for Pannenberg) is the point where God enters the system. Rahner wants to combat this

secular, anti-Christian anthropocentrism by a true theological anthropology. The difficulties which modern humanity has with theology are all related to the fact that

theological statements are not formulated in such a way that man can see how what is meant by them is connected with his understanding of himself, as witnessed to in his own experience.

Doctrines are credible precisely because they are seen as coherent responses to the question we are and as articulations of convictions and longings already possessed.(21)

For Rahner salvation is "Validation of a person's true self-understanding." The only sense in which for Rahner the theologian or apologist needs to do battle with a human being's own self-understanding is in combating the tendency to self-deification. Despite this avowal we shall have reasons to question whether his anthropology does actually relate to human beings' experience of themselves. Rahner sees the necessity for theology to be intelligible to modern humanity reflected in the serious concern of contemporary theologians with demythologisation. It is only by ensuring these links between dogma and experience that theology will "enter into the correct relationship with the constantly valid kerygma. What is essential remains."(22)

As we noted above, the human capacity for knowledge is evidence of innate, unobjective awareness of God so that God is co-willed and co-affirmed in every objective judgment and human commitment to a finite object. The task of the apologist is therefore to bring to consciousness the innate awareness of God

which is already present and already implicitly affirmed.

The unlimited transcendence of man, itself directed of necessity towards God, is raised up consciously by grace, although possible without explicit thematic reflection, in such a way that the possibility of faith in revelation is thereby made available.(23)

The evidence of human experience is thus used, by demonstration of the unity between it and Christian doctrine to prove this underlying transcendent awareness. All of this means that Rahner could be said to hold a theory of "natural theology" or "natural revelation" although he does not use this terminology because for him the human being does not exist as "natural", in opposition to the supernatural. In his awareness of God human reason is already supernatural, it is "elevated" and orientated to the explicit, conscious knowledge of faith. This "natural" revelation presents God's presence as question and the human being's historical, categorical self-interpretation, which takes place in his or her whole history, is often depraved or distorted. "Real" or "ultimate" revelation, with the character of event, is answer, the forgiving closeness of God in sanctifying and justifying grace. Where a human self-interpretation is pure and correct it is because it is willed and directed by God.(24)

Theology and apologetics are thus inseparable for Rahner and both look from humanity to God, not vice versa. The discovery of connections between the content of dogma and a human being's experience of himself or herself constitutes the



required change to a transcendent anthropological method in theology.(25)

There are however two important points to emphasise when talking about Rahner's transcendent anthropology. The first is that Rahner does not want to bring the whole of dogmatic theology into theological anthropology because of the "inescapable dualism" in spiritual creatures between what belongs to their "essence" and what belongs to their "concrete existence". The areas he excepts include the history of salvation (or perdition), moral theology, the eschata and the doctrine of God(26) - although the last at least is very closely bound up with his anthropology.

#### God and Creation

The second point is that this anthropology is negative, in the sense that it ends in God's incomprehensibility. This incomprehensibility results, as Aquinas understood, from the disproportion between the self-communication of the infinite God and the finite character of the beholder, and it is this incomprehensibility which is experienced as the reality offering itself directly to human vision.(27) This is the aspect of Rahner's theology which is closest to that of Barth. God is

the whole in its incomprehensible and ineffable origin and ground which transcends that whole to which we and our experimental knowledge belong... the ground which is not the sum of individual realities but which confronts them freely and creatively without forming a 'higher whole' with them. God is the silent mystery,

absolutely unconditioned and incomprehensible. God is the infinitely distant horizon to which the understanding of the individual realities, their interrelations and their manipulation must always point... God is the unconditioned, but conditioning ground, the sacred mystery, because of this everlasting incomprehensibility.... he is the silent abyss....(28).

This mystery is the content of humanity's experience of "being", and it is the basic and original way of knowing God. Rahner has to define God in this way in order for him to be seen as the ultimate reality which cannot be overreached or incorporated within a broader horizon.(29) In this sense God is known only as the term for transcendence(30), present only in his otherness and distance, not admitting of definition because known only by transcendent experience and because there is nothing beyond in terms of which it could be defined. This incomprehensibility is not an attribute of God, it is rather the attribute of his attributes.(31)

However it is possible to say more about God than this because God wished not to be the eternally distant one but to be the innermost centre of our existence, in free grace. Thus God's self-communication is rooted in his freedom, again as in Barth. Indeed it is necessary for the term "holy mystery" to be understood, deepened and gradually shown to be identical with God and this is done by understanding God's self-communication as "God making himself the innermost constituent element of man."(32) Once seen as the ground of humanity's transcendence and thus of its knowledge, the mystery can be understood

analogously as love. The human being is the event of God's free and forgiving self-communication; this is the supernatural constitution ..of.. humanity's transcendence. God's incomprehensibility is thus definitive for humanity. Reason is to be understood as the capacity of the incomprehensible and being exposed to transcendence as the condition of the possibility of knowledge which is not a matter of grasping mystery but of being grasped by it.

All man knows of himself in grasping this being-in-reference is that he loses himself in God because God is Mystery, our origin and future, our Whence? and Whither?(33)

God's purpose of self-communication is, in effect, Rahner's doctrine of election and it is the heart of his understanding of creation - indeed the heart of the Christian conception of reality:

The true and complete relation of the Absolute and of what we experience as ourselves and our world and know to be finite and contingent is not a relation of identity or of necessary connection... or the simple relation of an absolute effective cause to its effect. It is rather the free relation of the Absolute communicating himself.(34)

God's free decision for self-communication can be seen as the reason for creation and humanity's spiritual essence as established at creation in order for God's self-communication to be possible.(35) This is the essential definition of humanity:

By reason of its unlimited transcendence in knowledge and freedom, this nature can be potentiality for the self-communication of God, since it is thus capable of receiving this self-communication without being eliminated thereby...(36):

what is most intrinsic to humanity is God's self-communication at least as offer, because of God's freedom.(37) In more

metaphysical language Rahner talks of the possibility of creation as grounded in the radical possibility of God's self-exteriorization, so that the ultimate definition of humanity is as a possible mode of the existence of God, a "potential brother" of Christ.(38) Elsewhere Rahner denies that this makes the human being a pantheistic or gnostic emanation, because humanity is free(39); his awareness of the need for such a defence is significant and indicates a real problem, to which we will come in due course.

#### Humanity

This constitution of the human being as recipient of God's self-revelation is the potentia obedientialis for the hypostatic union between God and humanity. This potentia is not a particular faculty of humanity but must be identified with the spiritual and personal nature of the human being as such - it is human nature. It is the human being's dignity and value as a person. This "essence" of the human being is mediated by the objective. Humanity is in a state of "constant osmosis" between the two spheres of its spiritual personal nucleus, i.e., the intentional transcendent relation to Being, and its corporeality and situation in the concrete world. This union provides the means for the human being's cognitive access to himself or herself, which is through knowledge of the objective.(40) Although the intention to explain humanity in terms of its empirical roots may be legitimate, no such anthropology can explain the human being's consciousness of its self as personal

and a subject, as the subjectivity of these multiple, empirical objectivities, in a conscious and free relationship to the totality of itself.(41)

The non-particular, non-empirical data - the human being's openness - can be further elucidated as responsibility and freedom. In the context of Rahner's anthropology as such freedom is almost a function of human being: it varies in accordance with one's degree of being. Its source and goal is in God and is truly freedom only where "the degree of being proper to the spiritual person is reached" i.e. where the human being is dependent on God and is thus endowed with free self-mastery in dialogue with God. This creaturely freedom is a vehicle of God's self-communication; its content is Love.(42) Freedom is the possibility, through and beyond the finite, of taking a position before God: it is also the act or process of self-achievement before God.(43) This freedom means that humanity is responsible before God for its self-understanding and self-positing. However this freedom exists in synthesis with the necessity involved in living within an objective world:

The free subject is present to himself in his origins and freedom and distant from himself because of the objective factors through which he is mediated to himself.(44)

The final actualisation of a human being's freedom is not reached until death which is the "concretisation of freedom come to its maturity".(45) Rahner is saying that a human being is not really free until he or she is free before God (an Augustinian

understanding of freedom) although this act is itself an act of freedom. It is dependent on God's being and self-communication,

it is mystery, as the primordial dialogue, as freedom liberated from bondage and called into absolute mystery, in whom alone freedom is fully achieved.(46)

The freedom the human being possesses as a spiritual creature is the capacity for something absolutely final, the capacity for the eternal - although as such it is still "supported and authorized" by its absolute horizon, i.e. God. Indeed this "natural" freedom is only a presupposition created by God for his self-communication.(47) Freedom is thus an act, something to be realized, a demand not a fact.

Rahner's anthropology is thus defined in terms of God's will for self-communication. However this self-communication is not an automatic process following creation, because of finitude and sin. Humanity's freedom is enslaved because of sin, death and law, it is a guilty and imprisoned egoism which refuses to accept God's self-communication and to let God be God. The human being is therefore incapable as a sinner and as finite of fulfilling the potentia obedientialis, and anthropology is thus also defined by Christ, as saviour. God's will for self-communication is universal: it is also salvific, and it is achieved in Christ. The human being cannot affirm God's salvific will and the goodness therefore of creation on a theoretical plane because of finitude and sin, because of the impenetrability of God's will and of human freedom. However

this salvific will becomes a manifest principle in Christ and the individual can therefore experience it in hope and faith.(48)

#### Redemption and the Incarnation

The incarnation and creation - as for Barth - are one act of grace, of the communication by God to humanity of himself. Incarnation is moreover the more original act of self-emptying and as such it is the possibility of creation.(49) It is also the unique culmination of revelation, revealing the absolute unity of God's transcendent self-communication and its historical mediation.(50) As the perfect hypostatic union between God and humanity, Christ is "the supreme fulfilment of what man expresses"(51), Christ's humanity appears in the assumption of creation by God, as achieving the highest possible human perfection. As such "the incarnation is the first step and the lasting guarantee of ultimate self-transcendence," the "necessary start of the divinization of the world as a whole".(52)

Properly understood Christology and soteriology are therefore one, and Christology is the beginning and end of anthropology, because in Christ God has assumed the world ontologically.(53)

If God himself is man and remains so for all eternity - all theology is eternally anthropology. Man is for all eternity the expression of the mystery of God which participates in the mystery of its ground.(54)

God's purpose of self-communication by means of the incarnation was a purpose of creation, and history as a whole is therefore the process of divinization, moving towards the immediate presence of God. The incarnation is the event in which this essence of history becomes irreversible and is made manifest.(55) It was essential that this event, this act of God should be historical in order for it to be definitive, and also presumably in order for it to be accessible to humanity as historical beings. However Rahner cautions that this absolute event is not absolute so as to be identified with humanity's perfect fulfilment; history must be a movement towards consummation such that the individual's future as such is left open.(56) God's self-giving in Christ is eschatological.(57)

Christ is the perfect unity between humanity and God because he accepts God's offer of himself, the offer which is constitutive of human nature, and the God who communicates and the human being who accepts thus become irrevocably one. As promise and acceptance, the history of God's self-communication achieves self-presence in history and is present to human beings in a historical and communicable way. He is thus the offer and the reality becoming effective of itself(58), his fate is the promise of salvation, permitting concrete hope. By the incarnation the freedom of human freedom is established and present in the world(59), so that human beings can decide for or against God.



Because he sees Christology and soteriology as so closely linked (the incarnation is salvation), Rahner does not stress the usual soteriological problems.(60) However redemption is not accomplished for Rahner only in the fact of the incarnation. Christ's death is also necessary. Rahner's understanding of death is important throughout his theology but particularly in his idea of Christ's death as the definitive realisation of his freedom, his self-disposal - i.e. his acceptance of God. It was the event of gaining the finality of his human reality in the life of God himself, a passing into the silent incomprehensibility and unavailability of God.(61) As well as achieving definitively his acceptance of God's call, Christ's death was also an act of faith because of the incomprehensibility of the God to whom he was committing himself; as such it is an example and encouragement to all people to do the same. In his death Christ was surrendering himself to the absolute mystery, the dark abyss which, in faith, he called Abba. In achieving this surrender Jesus was definitively accepted by the one who enabled him to achieve it, in the resurrection which is also the perceptibility of his achievement for us. Christ's suffering is significant as the experience by God of what it means to be a human being who is not God, the misery of the creature suffered as God's own misery. Christ's passion was "the unique acceptance of the passion of mankind, in which it is accepted, suffered, redeemed and freed into the mystery of God."(62)

The human response should be in acceptance of the "scandal and absurdity of our inescapable situation", the "prison-van of finite existence" in faith, hope and love to our salvation, accepting it as the power and wisdom of God.(63) We must be able to experience the abyss as the holy mystery of God so that we may then call it God. In order for such acceptance and experience not to be acceptance of the absurd, it must imply or affirm a death which has already taken place in which the dialectic of activity and powerless suffering is reconciled by being identified with him who is the ultimate ground of its duality - Jesus Christ. This, then, is the means of God's divinization, his ontological assumption of the world, from which union in Christ, sanctifying grace, follows necessarily.(64) Prevenient grace is necessary because humanity's freedom is injured, and it accomplishes the "freeing of man's freedom into the immediacy of God's own freedom of being".(65) This is objective salvation which is achieved for all humanity. Jesus is the "definitive, unsurpassable and victorious utterance of God to man."(66)

God by his own sovereign efficacious grace has already decided the totality of the history of freedom (which forms the domain within which the individual's free choice is made) in favour of the salvation of the world in Christ, and in Christ has already promulgated this event. Without detriment to its freedom the world as a whole is 'conquered' and delivered by the love of God. That is the saving will of God with which Christian hope is primarily and fundamentally concerned.(67)

The subjective aspect of redemption is humanity's free acceptance of salvation, itself a gift from God, and a work of his grace because God's self-communication also effects its

acceptance, otherwise it would be reduced to an event remaining in the domain of the purely finite.(68) So

Christianity is the proclamation of the victory of God's grace and not actually merely the ambivalent offer to man's freedom of two possibilities, salvation or eternal perdition. But this very message of God's gracious freedom is more powerful than man's freedom, and always ahead of the latter without destroying it...(69)

This grace persists despite the possibility of a human being protesting against it.(70)

Talking about the human being's acceptance of God's offer as coming from and empowered by God himself Rahner sounds very like Barth in such statements as:

we must say of man here and now that he participates in God's being... has been given the Spirit, is already God's son here and now, and what he already is must only become manifest.(71)

Salvation is thus a structural feature characterising personal life even prior to justification.(72) There is thus a continuity between God and humanity which, I will argue, leads to difficulties in Rahner's doctrine of sin.

Grace and salvation are therefore existential determinations of human existence not just as offer but also as acceptance. This is the basis of Rahner's notorious "anonymous Christian" thesis which claims the "the expression of acceptance is always already given even before there is any personal acceptance of grace."(73) However this is not just an objective

state of affairs quite separate from subjective reality, but it is true to the way human beings experience themselves to be: grace is not a "thing" but a conditioning of the subject for relationship with God. The most objective reality of salvation is the most subjective.(74)

Every human being even previous to the explicit preaching of the Christian message, is always potentially a believer and already in possession, in the grace that is prior to his freedom, of what he is to believe.(75)

Rahner explains something of what this means in practice:

God and Christ's grace are in everything as the secret essence of all reality that is an object of choice. As a consequence it is not very easy to seek anything without having to do with God and Jesus Christ in one way or another. Even if someone who is still far away from any explicit... revelation accepts his human reality, his humanity in silent patience... as a mystery which loses itself in the mystery of eternal love and bears life in the very midst of death, he is saying Yes to Jesus Christ even if he does not realize it... If someone lets go and jumps, he falls into the depths which is actually there, not merely the depth he has measured. Anyone who accepts his human reality wholly and without reserve (and it remains uncertain who really does so) has accepted the Son of Man, because in him God accepts man.(76)

### Sin and Adam

Despite all these positive statements of the efficacy of salvation however Rahner does want to safeguard the human being's role, although the degree of his success here is questionable. There is a choice because the grace of salvation in Christ is not the only supernatural existential determining human existence; it is one of two existentials, the other being Adam's choice against God. Human beings can therefore ratify

the element of original sin and exist in the status peccati. Rahner insists that rejection of God is a possibility and it is a permanent possibility for humanity because a decision is not fully actualised until death, so that even the decision for acceptance of salvation and of God's grace may later be changed. If a human being tries to remain free without grace, to achieve freedom in the finite, he or she becomes a slave to the finite, which is objectively slavery to diabolic powers.(77) Indeed the Christian doctrine of freedom is constituted, Rahner says, by the possibility of a Yes or No to its own horizon. However, this possibility is an absolute contradiction and ultimate absurdity(78), and the two possibilities of Yes and No, of salvation and perdition are not two possibilities on an equal level for the creature to choose autonomously. Existentially and ontologically the morally evil decision is not even formally on the same plane as the good decision because God has already decided the outcome of history which is moving towards definitive salvation.(79) The fear (not knowledge) that there are those who are lost confronts a genuine, and for us undeniable, possibility, but not one which is demonstrated by its fulfilment: it is a fear which commands us to hope.(80) This is consistent with Rahner's understanding of freedom as freedom for God, not freedom of choice as such. The human being's role is in the choice of self, it is acceptance and recognition of what is already the case,i.e., of the supernatural existential of grace which has already overcome and included the existential of Adam's decision. Freedom's consent is co-operation with

God's work but not synergism, that is, not working with God's work as one of two efficient causes, as Arminius maintained. So there is a dialectic of freedom and necessity, but God's freedom is greater than humanity's. The message of God's gracious freedom is "more powerful than man's freedom and always ahead of it without destroying it." (81) A human being's role is also to hope for salvation in the future, which should result in an attitude of openness to the world and to other people and above all in an attitude of trusting surrender to death following Christ's example. This attitude of openness and trust is our subjective redemption. (82)

What then is humanity's need for redemption - sin? Rahner says that the "states of man" as expounded in traditional theology cannot be combined into a single system which would be clear and logical. They are not successive stages of the history of salvation, but two aspects of the one and the same situation. Just as there never was a time in which humanity was "objectively redeemed", there is no period or situation not affected by the "sin of the world". (83) As with Barth, this rejection of any idea of sequence is very significant for Rahner's thought about sin, and for my critique.

We have already noted that for Rahner humanity exists under two "existentials": Adam's sin and Christ's redemption between

which the human being must choose.(84) The essence of sin is an actualization of transcendent freedom in rejection of God(85) and as such must be personal, inevitably involving the human being as a whole. Also as we have seen, Rahner is concerned to insist that such a rejection is possible although it is a possibility which is "transcended" in some way by God's acceptance of humanity in Christ. However there is also a co-determination of our actions by the guilt of others, sin as a "situation" (and only analogously called "sin"). This "structural" sin includes the consequences of Adam's sin as well as of the sinful actions of those around us. Adam is, in Scripture, an aetiological inference from our experience of human reality as guilty, and indeed, original sin is implied, in anthropological terms, by the universal and ineradicable nature of the human situation as bearing the stamp of guilt.(86) Its most original starting point is a human being's awareness of himself or herself as a sinner who receives salvation through Christ. A theology of the beginning is necessary for a doctrine of original sin because the human being is an historical being: Rahner sees a theology of the beginning as necessary for any existential and ontological anthropology. Because human beings are historical beings, beginning must be seen as the basis. The absence of grace or holiness, the "holy Pneuma", which we should receive prior to our own personal existence as an existential modality is original sin. Such an absence must be due to someone's fault at the beginning, because it militates against God's will that human beings should have this grace, but

original sin is not a projection of the personal state of the guilt of Adam, but "merely" the absence of this grace. Rahner's understanding of the fall is in line with Catholic teaching in general (cf. Chapter Two, pp.47ff). However there is some ambiguity in his thought about what original sin is. It is called sin only analogously and it is not personal guilt, yet it is the objectification of guilt. It is a

certain sinfulness which is prior to the personal decision of the individual as such, so that in this personal decision this prior state of sinfulness is made manifest by a process of ratification.(87)

This prior sinfulness is necessary in order for sin's universality to be absolutely radical.

Rahner says that the existence of "real sin" at the beginning of human history is "no myth", although it is important for us not to see this sin as an actual event. It must be a "real" sin because the human being is "really" free. Rahner actually changed his mind about monogenism, about whether or not the individual person of Adam as the origin of the human race, is a necessary presupposition for the Catholic doctrine of original sin.(88) In 1954 (Theological Investigations I, E.T. 1961) Rahner was concerned to show an objective connection between monogenism and the Church's teaching on original sin, so that to contest the former is implicitly to deny the latter:

Adam was the first man; and where for the first time a man is to be found in the metaphysical and theological sense, that is where we must look for Adam.(89)

He argues here for monogenism on the basis of the Church's



teaching, Scripture, and metaphysics, although much of his argument is seen as demonstrating that monogenism is possible or consistent, rather than that it is necessary. However, in 1970 (T.I. II, E.T. 1974(90) ) he asserts that monogenism is not necessary and that the Church's doctrine leaves room for polygenism, so that the magisterium need not intervene in the discussion:

... it makes no difference whether humanity itself is conceived of in terms of monogenism or polygenism, provided only that it is recognised as a real unity, something which is possible in any case and independently of the question of polygenism.(91)

What is most important for Rahner is to see Adam (whatever Adam means) and original sin in the light of Christ:

Original sin and grace, therefore, to the extent that both these realities are prior to the personal decision of man do not, properly speaking, follow one upon another in a temporal succession, but rather both together imply a single, dialectic 'situation' of man (as a being endowed with freedom) to the extent that a specification is imparted to him both by the 'beginning' (that which provides the origins of mankind) and by Christ as the 'end' and 'goal'.(92)

So humanity has to choose whether its basis will be the absence of grace imparted from Adam or grace through Christ. There is always the "temptation of ratifying his Adamite lack of grace by personal sin and of making it the real meaning of his existence."(93)

The justified are still in the situation of concupiscence and death, though by grace and its acceptance original sin is no longer guilt for them.(94) Concupiscence, for Rahner, has two

elements, one of which is essential to human nature and one of which is the consequence of the loss of grace in Adam: the former element includes various weaknesses etc., which would have been present before the fall.(95) Concupiscence, which must be distinguished from personal sin but which is still part of the need for salvation, is theologically understood as the dualism in the human being between essence and existence, expressed in but not the same as the dualism between spirituality and sensibility. It

consists essentially in the fact that man in this regime does not overcome even by his free decision the dualism between what he is as nature prior to his existential decision and what he becomes as person by this decision,... Man never becomes wholly absorbed either in good or in evil.(96)

This dualism can also be experienced as the dualism between "person" and "nature". This dualism, Rahner says, is the ground of the distinction between objective and subjective redemption, i.e. between salvation as achieved and as not yet achieved and writes of "that created finitude even in working out its salvation which is not identical with the necessary essence of man and his freedom", resulting in "a concrete, temporal situation which goes to constitute the real nature of freedom as it is in fact exercised.(97) It is this view of human creatureliness which leads Rahner to talk about the "prison-van of our finite being", the "cross of existence".(98) This is why he couples finitude with personal guilt as being the joint need of redemption(99), which subjectively involves the acceptance of one's concrete existence as within God's grace, an acceptance finally actualized in one's death in hope. So the human being,

as nature of itself, "must reckon with the possibility of remaining without absolute fulfilment."(100)

However Rahner is not happy with the "extrinsicism" which opposes what humanity is by "nature" to what it is supernaturally. These are not two clear categories so that we can never tell exactly what humanity would be if it were not determined by God's call.(101) What God decrees for humanity must be "eo ipso an interior ontological constituent of his concrete quiddity, 'terminative', even if it is not constituent of his nature."(102) Grace penetrates both essence and existence, the supernatural act is not different from the natural:

Actual human nature is never 'pure' nature, but nature in a supernatural order, which man (even the unbeliever and the sinner) can never escape from; nature superformed (which does not mean justified) by the supernatural grace offered to it.(103)

This is a correlative with what Rahner says about Christ as the beginning of the divinization of man in fact.

Because of this dualism between essence and existence a human being can never really be sure whether he or she has accepted God's call. God's will is impenetrable and the human being's freedom is impenetrable and he or she is thus ultimately uncertain about how God will deal with them and whether or not they will decide for God. We can never know whether our action

is the objectification of a real decision or the result of manipulation and necessity.(104)

Alongside this, however, stand Rahner's statements about the universally victorious nature of God's universal salvific will, within which the sin of the world is permitted by God only within the framework of a divine decree absolutely predestining the world as a whole to salvation. Theology has a "supralapsarian subject-matter", the infralapsarian economy must not be seen as a second enterprise of God to make good the failure of his first plan because of the fall, but must be seen within a wider supralapsarian context making God's "permission" of sin, as part of his pre-fall plan, "intelligible as far as possible."(105)

In conclusion then Rahner's theological anthropology as such is paradoxical. It cannot be a "system" in a true sense because of the "definitive dialectic" of the individual statements of theological anthropology, "even to the point of seeming contradiction."(106) These statements include the human being as historical, yet not determined by space and time; as free and yet determined, particularly as incorporated within history, and yet already endowed with grace to be realised in that history; as sinner yet surrounded by God's love and thus beyond death. These dialectic statements point ultimately to

the mystery of God.

However beyond this dialectic Rahner's statement of the core of the Christian faith stresses the determinative nature of God's saving call, and (again as with Barth) it seems that this dialectic is more or less resolved by this emphasis:

... we who believe know that we are ineluctably engaged by the incomprehensible mystery of our lives whom we call God and who ceaselessly and silently grasps us and challenges our hope and love even when we show little concern for him in the practice of our lives or even actually deny him in theory; we who believe are convinced that this incomprehensible mystery whom we call God has definitively and forgivingly promised himself to us in the life, death and eternal living presence of Jesus of Nazareth, as the content and eternal validity of our own lives, which do not perish. We who believe constitute... the community of believers, the Church... (107)

#### WOLFHART PANNENBERG

AS R.J. Neuhaus notes in his introduction to Theology and the Kingdom of God Pannenberg sees himself as a "Church Theologian", holding himself responsible, like Barth, Brunner and Rahner, to the continuing tradition of Christian reflection.(108) He notes the decisive difference from Barth in Pannenberg's placing of this tradition within the wider community of humanity as such, with its canons of rationality. This relates to Pannenberg's view of the professional theologian as a teacher of the community, carrying out a "reformulation" of

...the substantial truth of the Christian faith... in the context of contemporary experience and understanding of reality in all dimensions of human existence.(109)

Its touch-stone, the "substantial truth" is the Christ event which can function as such because it has its meaning in itself, rather than merely in interpretations of it. The theologian thus presupposes this historically unique event and person and seeks to formulate its universal meaning for reality and for humanity's consciousness of truth.(110) Pannenberg's concern for interaction between the theologian and modern humanity's understanding of truth and of itself brings him into common ground with Rahner.

#### Revelation and Knowledge of God

The most radical difference between Pannenberg's theology and that of Rahner is in their understandings of revelation with which the theologian is concerned. Rahner's means of opposing the subjective concern in theology with the individual's being is by broadening that subjectivity in its relation to transcendence. Pannenberg however opposes the prevalent pre-occupation with God's direct self-communication as such, which is at the root of Rahner's theology as well as that of Barth.(111) He opposes it because he sees Scripture as concerned with God's indirect revelation in history and because of the subjective mode of such revelation which makes it inaccessible to verification.

Dealing with the first of these points, Pannenberg and his associates analyse the understanding of revelation in Scripture and within the Christian tradition and conclude that this understanding does not see God's revelation of himself as an actual disclosure of being.(112) Pannenberg traces the origins of this emphasis to Hegel's strict definition of revelation as the self-revelation of the absolute which, as such, can only be unique and which, resting on the full disclosure of the absolute as spirit, can have no medium which is distinct from itself.(113) He sees this understanding as exemplified in Barth. Not only does such an understanding not appear in Scripture, except where there is gnostic influence; such a revelation cannot maintain God's hiddenness within revelation and must have, in an immediate way, that content which it wishes to communicate. It also presupposes continuity, a direct link, between sender and receiver.

The second point Pannenberg also sees typified in Barth's thought: a view of revelation as a direct "vertical" self-disclosure of God's being, resulting in a revelation which is inaccessible to the usual human methods of investigation and validation. It can only be experienced and verified subjectively. Whereas Barth claims that to make God objectively accessible is to subject him to the human's control Pannenberg claims that this is the very result of making God accessible only subjectively. He draws on Hegel's critique of the

withdrawal of theology into the subjective in response to the Enlightenment:

'What has its root only in my feelings is only for me; it is mine but not its own; it has no independent existence in and for itself.' Thus one must show 'that God is not rooted in feeling merely, is not merely my God.'(114)

This relates not only to the verifiability of revelation, but to humanity's constitution as historical being:

It is this that first makes intelligible the fact that the divine mystery is not merely an unconscious presupposition of the structure of man's existence, but rather something man finds himself confronted by and is always associating with.(115)

In this context Pannenberg deals specifically with Rahner. He accepts that an anthropology such as Rahner's may raise the question about God, but the truth of such an anthropology, as well as the truth of revelation, must be related to "the whole current experience of existence": "The gods of religion confront men as realities distinct from themselves because they are experienced as powers over the whole of man's existence including the world."(116) Such verification is thus related to the history of religions.

### Revelation and History

Pannenberg sees this analysis of theology as leaving two options:

- a. the totality of reality should be seen as an indirect communication of God : natural theology.
- b. the totality of reality in its temporal development should be seen as history and as the self-communication of God.



Pannenberg takes the second of these two options, building to a great extent on Hegel's work.

Revelation is no longer understood in terms of a supernatural disclosure, or of a particularly religious experience and religious subjectivity, but in terms of the comprehensive whole of reality which, however, is not simply given, but is a temporal process of a history that is not yet completed, but open to a future, which is anticipated in the teaching and personal history of Jesus.(117)

A major emphasis throughout Pannenberg's theology is the idea of unity and in relation to revelation this is the unity of history. It is as a whole that history reveals God: anything including history can only be known as a whole when it is complete and inasmuch as we receive revelation now within the process of history, it must therefore be as an anticipation of that end. This understanding of the priority of the future underlies and determines all Pannenberg's specific theological doctrines. The future is powerful because it is the unity of all things, of all history and thus determines the nature of any particular event which can only be known in relation to the whole. Finite events are thus described as "springing" from the future, which has an imperative claim on such events.(118) What this means must be seen in relation to each particular idea in Pannenberg's theology and will thus be worked out in this way. It is as the proleptic appearance of the end that Christ is the absolute revelation of God, and through him the end of history is the basis for understanding world history. In this way Pannenberg believes theology can answer the need for universality in theology, it can deal with the hermeneutical problems of Scripture and bridge the gulf between the situation

of Scripture and the situation of the contemporary interpreter.(119)

This is not to say that modern history is God's revelation as such, but theology must no longer oppose revelation and history: history is God acting in his creation.(120) This history must be "real" history, not metahistory or suprahistory. It is therefore open to critical historical research. This is a refutation of Kähler's distinction between Historie and Geschichte, between the facts of history and their interpretation or meaning, and thus between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.(121) A clear implication of this is that the human being has "natural" knowledge of God such as Barth rejects: indeed this is the mode of knowledge of God. Such knowledge exists not only because his revelation is in history but also because of humanity's inherent relationship with God of which human beings must always be conscious, in some form. Pannenberg, like Rahner, is asserting a basic continuity between humanity and God, the implications of which, for sin, must be questioned.

In his Theological Anthropology Pannenberg expounds the imago Dei in terms of humanity's destiny for self-realization and says, in language very like that of Rahner, that in the process of realizing this destiny

..as they thematize a divine reality that grounds the unity of the world, they already have, at every point, a knowledge of a mystery which transcends the world in its entirety and with which their own existence, itself transcending and therefore encompassing the world, is mysteriously interwoven.(122)

However, for Pannenberg the debate about humanity's prior knowledge of God comes under the label of "apologetics" rather than "natural theology".(123)

Revelation is thus indirect(124) just as humanity's relation to the infinite is indirect, mediated through human and worldly events:

...indirect self-revelation, as a reflex of his activity in history. The totality of his speech and activity, the history brought about by God, shows who he is in an indirect way.(125)

This means that a whole range of events, activities and words can indirectly express something about God. Revelation as God's self-revelation, in the narrower sense, is the whole of history. Just as there is no direct, unmediated knowledge of God there is no directly referential unequivocal use of language with reference to God. Pannenberg rejects any theory of analogy - close to that of Rahner - which co-ordinates the unknown to the known, as diametrically opposed to the reduction to mystery which he sees as the outcome of humanity's knowledge of God. Analogy assumes despite all dissimilarity a common logos between God and finitude. This is not acceptable to Pannenberg. As Kant demonstrated, conclusions about God drawn from analogy are "allowable" in schematizing, i.e. in understanding a concept,

but cannot be used to infer. What is said about God on the basis of his actions has a "doxological" structure for Pannenberg, and this historical basis is the only basis for such statements.(126) The description "doxological" here means that these statements about God are the expression of adoration of God because of his works. In this act of adoration the "I" of the worshipper is sacrificed and along with it, the conceptual univocity of his speech: i.e. the usual human sense of a word which becomes equivocal in the act of transfer of their finite contents to God's eternal essence, is surrendered to God's freedom, and our words are transferred to his sublime infinite - they become equivocal in relationship to their ordinary meaning. "They are thereby set in contrast to their ordinary meaning. They become mysterious and this can even have a reflexive, renovating influence upon everyday linguistic usage." This change is inaccessible to us except within the continuing relationship of adoration.

God is not.. in analogy, to our speech about him, but rather... metaphorically speaking - he makes our metaphorical speech his own through his revelation and thereby for the first time gives our words of praise their ultimately valid content. The correspondence of our words to God himself has not already been decided, but is yet to be decided.(127)

Doxological statements are thus proleptic because they can only be made with a view to the totality of reality, the future from which their meaning is decided.(128)

### Theological Anthropology

Pannenberg's view of revelation is also determinative of and

determined by his anthropological insistence that the human being is a historical being. The human being's historicity is "in and because of the orientation of his openness for being generally toward God and thus toward a possible revelation", as Rahner saw(129), although in Rahner the emphasis on the process of history is missing. "Only in the mode of history can the destiny of man for fellowship with the infinite God take shape."(130) This is the truth of humanity which the anthropological sciences can never fully arrive at: this historical nature of humanity is the principle of human individuation and it is part of the "openness" which is essential to a human being(131), for "the question of what man is is really the question of the destiny of man and thus of the future of man"(132):

...the essence of man, like his salvation, the fulfilment of his destiny, consists in openness for God. Openness for God is the real meaning of the fundamental structure of being human, which is designated as openness to the world in contemporary anthropology, although this designation means an openness beyond the momentary horizon of the world... Conversely, God's revelation means at the same time essentially the opening of men for God.(133)

The assertion of humanity's openness re-opens the question of human freedom - closed in the materialist's view of the world. Although there are tensions between the modern view of freedom and the Christian view the modern view has its origins in the Judaeo-Christian tradition: it is not a self-evident fact of human nature. However it is an essential part of humanity which is achieved only in the encounter with others, and ultimately is revealed by Christ, in whom freedom is liberated in love.(134)

The human being exists in a state of freedom and dependence. The human being is free because of his or her status within creation, because of liberation by the future which is the basis of creation. Yet this liberation is itself dependence, the human question "lives from the event of the divine answer":

In that man's existence is communicated by the question about his destination and fulfilment, he is already borne by the reality at which such inquiry is directed.

So the question of human existence is the question about God because this brings out its real meaning.(135)

This is the human being's self-transcendence which distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation(136), and involves their ability to reflect and to transform their milieu on the basis of their capacity for the projection of a future different from their present.(137) This theological view of humanity is arguable in scientific and anthropological terms and this is crucial for Pannenberg as the arena of apologetics, of the unavoidable confrontation between Christian theology and Enlightenment atheism.

Theology has to learn that after Feuerbach it can no longer mouth the word 'God' without offering any explanation; that it can no longer speak as if the meaning of the word were self-evident; that it cannot pursue theology 'from above', as Barth says, if it does not want to fall into the hopeless, and what is more, self-inflicted isolation of a higher glossolalia and lead the whole church into this blind alley. ...the first and fundamental choice between theology and atheism in fact lies in the understanding of man, in anthropology.(138)

What this Christian apologetic must do is to demonstrate the

essential religious dimension of human being as making talk about God meaningful: to demonstrate that simply by the way they live, human beings presuppose a vis-à-vis on which they are infinitely dependent.(139) Such an apologetic can demonstrate that it belongs to the essence of human existence to hope in an openness which goes beyond every finite human situation and that in the individual's own life the search for the definition of humanity finds no final answer. This exercise of hope and trust by every human being "materially thematizes" the divine reality which grounds the unity of the world and thus every human being has some level of knowledge through this exercise of this mystery.(140) It can also demonstrate the unity of reality as history - as disclosed in Christianity - and thus it exercises and demonstrates "Christian solidarity with the godless."(141)

So there must be a theological anthropology which relates to the way human beings are. Pannenberg demonstrates this type of study in What is Man? He is particularly concerned with hope as an expression of openness, but also with personality, dominion, imagination and trust in the world and others, self-consciousness of temporality and awareness of a destiny, of need for fulfilment. The anthropological sciences provide a phenomenological picture of humanity, supplementing each other to provide a concrete picture. The contribution of Christianity to anthropological study and to the development and experience of the structure of human existence itself has been the eternal

value of the individual and his life, and the distinctive element in Christian anthropology is the assertion that humanity is reconciled to God in Christ.(142) The anthropological sciences also help with the evaluation of religious experience and the question of illusion by

grasping the fundamental anthropological structures of human behaviour (Verhaltens) which manifest themselves in the psychologically observed modes of behaviour (Verhaltensweisen) but may also be concealed by them.(143)

It is necessary that the Christian claims for God's revelation in Christ stand the test of human beings' experience of reality today.(144) It provides evidence for Christian claims for existence; in the human being's existential awareness of the future there is evidence that our life is related to an abundant future which transcends all finite happenings.(145)

In his Theological Anthropology Pannenberg takes on in more detail the initial task of a theological anthropology, i.e., the exploration of the phenomenon of human existence within the social sciences, with a view to their religious and theological implications. "Openness" is the phenomena upon which he particularly focuses, relating this concept of social anthropology to that of the imago dei. Outlining support for his argument within Christian tradition and in Scripture, he expounds the image of God as being a matter not of the humanity's created constitution as such, but of human beings' destiny for union with God. The image of God is           humanity's



destination revealed in Christ and which, therefore, cannot be lost.

He sees the empirical and scientific correlate of this idea in the anthropologists' ideas about self-realization, developed under the influence particularly of Herder. This future orientation of humanity is seen, according to Pannenberg, in its "exocentric" nature, that which distinguishes it from all animal life. This is to be seen in practical and specific ways as well as religious ways, e.g. dependence on the environment and other human beings, the extra nos of faith.(146) That which places human beings in solidarity with animal life, however, and which results in a state of tension with human exocentricity, is centredness or egocentricity: sin, which Pannenberg also relates to anthropological research (see p.205ff below).

Pannenberg sees Tillich, Brunner, Rahner and Ebeling as attempting to take on this very task of theological anthropology. However in opposition to an anthropology such as Rahner's, which he sees as decisive for theology as such, Pannenberg insists on the limits of this anthropology as an apologetic prolegomena to Christian theology but not as Christian theology itself. The central problem of such an anthropology is whether openness presupposes a supporting ground or is expressive of the self-creative power of human beings. It can show that religious experience is a constituent part of humanity, but it cannot take us beyond the human being's

awareness to proof of the reality of God. Such proof of extra-subjective reality is only encountered in the context of experience of the world, i.e. in history, and such knowledge of the truth is only final with the end of history.(147)

Pannenberg's emphasis on history thus fulfils various functions. It provides theology with the crucial link with the reality of the way human beings experience themselves to be and with the way they are seen in the sciences, and it thus prevents theology from retreating into an unfalsifiable subjectivity, by making theology publicly accessible. It also gives theology unity and comprehensive scope in the understanding of history as revelation. More than this, the understanding of reality and revelation as historical is the Scriptural view, based on Scripture's understanding of God's character. However, as with Rahner, we may find cause to be critical of Pannenberg's own adherence to the first of these functions (the link with reality), that is, it is questionable whether Pannenberg's own anthropology and epistemology really relate to the way human beings experience themselves to be.

#### God and Creation

As the basis of history, establishing its continuity, God's faithfulness and his fulfilment of promises is a key datum: indeed this is how the Bible sees the phenomenon of the continuous connection between the new events of the present and

the events of the past.(148) However, God's transcendence over history and creation is more than this. The absolute future is fundamental as the point from which all things can be seen in their totality and can thus be known. So, to be truly transcendent God must occupy that position at the end of all things, and that position is his transcendence. God is the power of the future. This is related not only to Pannenberg's emphasis on unity but also to his understanding of truth. He claims that the Hebrew view of truth, as opposed to the static, abstract Greek ideal, exemplified in Plato's pure forms, is dynamic and historical. Ultimate truth happens as a process. Because this requires the completion of the process, "What a thing is is first decided by its future, by what becomes of it."(149) Pannenberg traces the development of the idea of history as goal-oriented, rather than mythically past-oriented, throughout the Old Testament and especially in Paul.(150)

It is from the future that the abiding essence of things discloses itself, because the future alone decides what is truly lasting.(151)

This is not a purely metaphysical notion but is linked with the apocalyptic tradition, within which Jesus' person and ministry must be seen, which saw Yahweh as the Lord of all nations and history. Yahweh therefore has all knowledge and truth as the final resolution of all historical contradictions and it is only in relationship with God that humanity can claim

true knowledge and can hope for the future. Three ideas are essential to this: unity, the future and sovereignty. God's sovereignty - his coming to his sovereignty - establishes unity, and his coming means that he has the power of the futures of the human beings in his rule. As the power of the future, God is the origin of human freedom, which cannot be understood as deriving from what already exists: it is the gift, from the future, of possibilities which do not yet exist. God's being is not an objectified being presently existing in its fulness because it is his rule which is in the process of coming to be. It is thus as the coming God that God reveals to freedom its future. However because of the ontological priority which Pannenberg accords to the future - not merely epistemological priority - this does not mean that there is development in God, as Whitehead and Hartshorne maintain, because what turns out to be true in the future will be evident as having been true all along.(152) This is the implication of the message of the coming Kingdom of God. It is God who places finite reality into being by distinguishing it from his own powerful future, and it is he who unifies history as the power confronting all creatures alike. God's eternity is his being the future of all ages.(153)

...The very idea of God demands that there be no future beyond himself. He is the ultimate future. This in turn suggests that God should be conceived as pure freedom. For what is freedom but to have the future in oneself and out of oneself? In his freedom, God is present to himself and keeps present to himself everything that is past, of which he has been the future... Thus he keeps his past creatures in the present of his future.(154)

God is also personal not by analogy with human personality but

as the origin of the understanding of humanity as personal. There is a vagueness and indeterminateness in the events of nature and this contingency is a presupposition of the effort to make events purposeful, but also for understanding the future as personal and to speak of God as a personal power.(155)

By virtue of all these things, God is the answer to human questionableness, i.e., human openness, but this is as the presupposition of this questionableness, not merely its expression. As this presupposition, God is "wholly other", as we saw in Pannenberg's theory of doxological language. He is incomprehensible mystery, which is part of the openness of the future as still full of possibilities, although this is a hiddenness within revelation; it is not an abstract propertylessness because it is demonstrated in specific, contingent events with a concrete meaning, through which God assumes properties into his essence. "Precisely the God who acts in a personal manner in such deeds is the one who because of his freedom is 'wholly other'."(156) Neither does this mean that God is aloof and separated from humanity because he is involved in concrete human existence, a mystery which is "affirmative" of human existence. This, again, implies that the absolute reality is active, personal and reliable. God is not transcendent so as to be self-sufficient.(157) God's goal in his Kingdom is his concern and intention for the transformation of the world through his rule, and the guidance of God's providence

is necessary, given the inability of humanity to produce their own identity through their own actions: "If the history of the human race is to be a formative process, leading to a fulfilled humanity, it can be such only under divine providence."(158)

God's creation is also seen from the perspective of his futurity. Biblically it is as Creator that his history is universal, incorporating all events and continuities, all the experience, plans and deeds of human beings, despite their sinfulness, as the media of his will. God's creativity is also an exercise of love as well as power (the power of the future).(159) However Pannenberg's doctrine of creation is also radically affected by his understanding of time: creation occurs from the end of all things, from the future, and this is why Scripture says that creation is in and through Christ. The eschaton which has appeared in Christ represents the time and point from which creation took place because in it the true nature of creation is revealed for the first time.(160)

It is this view of creation and not the mythological view, which sees reality as oriented to the past, which characterises the true understanding of God and the world. While Pannenberg is concerned with the proper importance and universality of myth, he characterises mythical thought as thought oriented and directed towards a primal and archetypal period in the past and

as existing in the Old Testament in conflict with the understanding of reality as directed towards the eschatological future.(161)

For the man who thinks and lives cultically and mythically, then, the decisive event has already taken place in the early mythical period and all his endeavours are directed towards gaining as here, in his present life, in that very early event... The mythical past is the only meaningful reality for him and the future is meaningless insofar as it is unable through cult to play a part in the mythical past.(162)

In the Old Testament history itself takes on the function of a primal age providing the basis of the present age, i.e., the Exodus becomes an archetype within limits: pursuing this language for Pannenberg Jesus' history becomes primal history, the basis of reality, although Pannenberg does not use this language because he sees the eschatological understanding of reality as the way of thought which is characteristic of Christianity, developing through the Old Testament and into the New Testament, liberating Israel from the pattern of a primal age which determined everything, and demonstrated by Jesus' self-interpretation and his history.(163) As the "religion of promise" Christianity first sought salvation in a future which is still open, instead of in the earliest past. The mythical element of the New Testament is in the archetypal and universal significance of Jesus but the general framework is eschatological. Theology, Pannenberg says, has not realised the task involved in the co-inherence of creation and eschatological future in Jesus,

because its doctrine of creation remains within the confines of a thinking oriented towards the mythical origin of the primordial age, in contrast to the

eschatological character of the message and history of Jesus.(164)

Pannenberg is thus not concerned with the Genesis narrative as a major key to understanding humanity and sin in the present. Although he does say that the Genesis narrative is an aetiological saga, but in the form of a myth(165), he, unfortunately for our purposes, does not expound its aetiological significance but dwells on its mythological nature. This mythological nature includes, for Pannenberg, the significance of the primordial time as an origin and explanation for the basic characteristics of human life and also the pre-eminence of the primordial time as the state to which humanity must return. It is the latter point which is most significant for Pannenberg, this pre-eminence of the original state being replaced in the developing Jewish, and ultimately Christian, view of history by orientation to the future. Pannenberg does also discuss some of the problems involved in maintaining a real fall, because of the assertion this calls for of an original, perfect state, and he indicates the problems this raises for Müller, Kierkegaard, Tillich, Brunner, Niebuhr and Ricoeur. He affirms an alternative to this way of thought in terms of the image of God as humanity's future destiny, but does not do so in terms of sin which, as we shall see, causes problems.



Pannenberg sees the traditionally central ideas of Christian anthropology as creation in God's image and sin, related in some way to Adam's fall, but he asserts that these alone do not indicate the distinctively Christian element in theological anthropology(166); this element is humanity's reconciliation in Christ. The assertion of Adam's freedom followed by sin he sees as a compromise of Christian thought with stoicism, in the acceptance of an element of freedom alongside the insistence on the human need for salvation. Pannenberg does see sin as something given, rooted in the structure of human nature, but what is most important about human beings is that they are determined from and for the future by reconciliation in Christ, and are oriented to the future in openness which is their essential nature.

#### Redemption and the Incarnation

In Christ creation is also "mediated into sonship" and thus reconciled with God. This is one of the ways Pannenberg expresses the event of salvation in Christ.(167) We have noted above Pannenberg's rejection of the distinction between Historie and Geschichte and that between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. For Pannenberg Jesus' significance as Saviour and his designation as divine lie within his history. He presupposes that Jesus' history carries its meaning within itself: meaning is inherent in event and this is why God can be revealed in history without an accompanying explanation. This principle finds its ultimate demonstration in Christ's life and

meaning.(168) The principle of the priority of the future is also demonstrated here and it places the emphasis of Pannenberg's Christology firmly on the resurrection. It was the resurrection and not Jesus' pre-Easter activity and claims which established his unity with God which is the starting point of Christology. Jesus' claims were always related to the question of future validation and the context of apocalyptic thought within which Jesus saw himself is crucial for this interpretation. Although the resurrection of Jesus, rather than that of all humanity, was not in line with Jesus' expectations, it confirmed his pre-Easter activity and his person as being divine. Pannenberg does not want to say that Jesus became something he previously was not, because the confirmation of Jesus in the resurrection had retroactive force, and thus constitutes his revelational identity with God.(169) Because the historical Jesus is one with God and thus reveals him there can be a definitive, absolute revelation of God which is consistent with Pannenberg's understanding of revelation as mediated through history. As such a revelation of God, Jesus is the anticipation of the end, when revelation will be temporally complete and history will be seen as one. The resurrection as well as constituting and revealing Christ's identity with God, reveals the final determination of creation: life out of death. This is what creation is for, for life with God, for eschatological perfection.(170) So the resurrection reveals human freedom and destiny. Thirdly, the resurrection reveals God's rule (this is really one with the revelation of God in

Jesus), as the rule of the one who raises Jesus and is thus seen to be one with him. As the medium of the revelation of God in this way Jesus was

only a forerunner. He revealed the redeeming love of God precisely as the forerunner and herald of God's still imminent Kingdom. His message was preliminary and precisely in that way he participated in and revealed the ultimate reality, the love of God.(171)

The resurrection is however not just the revelation of these things, but it establishes them. Jesus' unity with God, as we noted above, is established by resurrection, and so is the unity of history.(172) It is in Christ that the future becomes determinative because it has happened, in advance, in him.

This future has already become determinative of the present since the appearance of Jesus. In virtue of the public ministry and destiny of Jesus it has become possible to live one's present existence in its current, concrete configuration in the way it appears in the light of God's future and thus in his ultimate truth.(173)

... in the ministry of Jesus the futurity of the Reign of God became a power determining the present... such presence of the Reign of God does not conflict with its futurity but is derived from it and is itself only the anticipatory glimmer of its coming.(174)

So, in Christ, creation and the eschatological future belong together and man's destiny, for which he is created from the future, is fulfilled.(175) "In his person, Jesus has become the fulfilment of the human destiny to community with God", in him the "true man, the real human being that is the destiny of us all has appeared."(176) This fulfilment is in Jesus' union with God which is the fulfilment of that "openness" which is constitutive of humanity. "As the new man who brings the destiny of man in general to a fulfilment superior to the first

creation, Jesus is the Son of God."(177) Christ's fulfilment of human destiny becomes very important in Pannenberg's Theological Anthropology. Christ is the prototype, revealing human destiny, the image of God, only the visible appearance of which could bring that image to us in completion. In this historical once-for-all saving event, the eschatological destiny of the human being becomes present and operative.(178) A specific explanation of how human openness is made possible is that in Christ God's incomprehensibility is endurable.(179) This already determinative and transforming presence of the Kingdom of God is God's creative love, and is also known as the overcoming of the Spirit.(180)

Pannenberg also shares Rahner's metaphysical use of the terms "essence" and "existence" although he tends to use "appearance" rather than "existence" quite often, because what exists is of course determined by the future and thus may not be what it appears to be. God's essential presence is one with appearance in Jesus. This proleptic presence of God is described as the anticipation not of our final essence and significance, i.e., communion with God which is the destiny of all humanity, although realised in a myriad ways.(181) Indeed the possibility of metaphysical statements expressing "essences" depends on anticipations of a future which has not yet appeared and Pannenberg's metaphysics thus depends on his view of time.(182) The "essence" of human life, as opposed to its actual

character, includes what is "not yet" but what is nonetheless determinative, and "essential" human nature thus becomes a matter of destiny for which Christ is decisive.(183) It is important, however, to see this understanding of "essence" in the context in which Pannenberg places it in Theological Anthropology. It is not the timeless "essence" of Tillich, which is to be projected back to the beginning of human life and seen as an original, given state, but it is a human characteristic, seen in religious and ethical experience.(184) Salvation is thus accomplished as the eschatological summation, the "reconciliation of humanity across all chasms".

'Salvation' means nothing else than the fulfilment of the ultimate destiny towards which man is aimed, for which he seeks in his entire behaviour. Salvation is the wholeness of his life for which he longs but never finally achieves in the course of his earthly existence... Only through the granting of salvation, however, is the essence of man realized... God's revelation means the salvation of men, fulfilment of their destiny, of their essence(185),

which we have seen above, is achieved in Christ.

Despite the great emphasis on the resurrection Christ's death is also significant for Pannenberg, and one aspect of this significance is also related to the disjunction between essence and actual existence, the "not yet" of the destiny achieved in Christ, i.e., sin.

In terms of human openness to God Christ's death is

self-sacrifice, not in his intention to die, because he had no prior knowledge of his death, but in his acceptance of it. Jesus found his life again by being prepared to give it up for God's kingdom, as we also should be prepared.(186) The cross also manifests the universality of sin which is presupposed by the universal salvation achieved. In Human Nature, Election and History Pannenberg affirms this reconciliation as the distinctive feature in Christian anthropology, in the cause of which Christ died for all humanity.(187) The cross may only be understood in the light of the resurrection, but seen thus, it is seen as punishment suffered in our place for the blasphemous existence of humanity.(188) While Pannenberg accepts the New Testament interpretation of Jesus' death as expiatory sacrifice in the light of the cultus, this is not its real significance. It is the human who needs reconciliation because of sin, not God. Christ's sacrificial devotion was to the world rather than to God.(189) However Christ's death can be seen as substitutionary, as vicarious penal suffering, in a sense although it must be seen as such only in the light of the resurrection, not of the incarnation. However, Christ's death is seen as taking up and overcoming our death(190) as well as dealing in some way with sin.

Pannenberg's explanation of Christ's death as substitution is unique and complex, and depends heavily on his understanding of the resurrection as retroactively justifying Jesus'

pre-Easter life. By the resurrection it was revealed that Christ was righteous, that he was not in fact the blasphemer he was crucified as by the Jews: his condemners were therefore due for punishment, not because of the law - because in terms of the law prior to the resurrection they were right to crucify Jesus - but because he whom they condemned turned out to be the one whom God legitimated.(191) The fact that the blasphemer deserves rejection by God i.e. death, is a consequence, independent of Jewish understanding, of the fact that God as Creator is the source of life so that anyone who turns away from God cuts himself off from life. This connection between sin and death, Pannenberg argues, unlike Paul's ideas of vicariousness, is still valid today. The universality of the substitution by Jesus is established by this universal validity of the link between sin and death. The Jews as blasphemers represent all humanity in their rejection of Christ, and Jesus thus died for all. Pannenberg sees the idea of vicarious suffering also as tenable today because substitution is a universal phenomenon in social life, grounded in the social character of existence per se. With this presupposition,

... one is permitted to understand Jesus' death as a vicarious event in view of the unique reversal that the one rejected as a blasphemer is, in the light of his resurrection, the truly just man, and his judges, in contrast are the real blasphemers.

This can be seen as authorised by God because Jesus' rejection was for the sake of the law which God himself gave to Israel, so we can say that:

God himself, who raised Jesus, had laid on him the punishment for blasphemy ... he let Jesus go to his

death in place of the people whose resistance to Jesus is revealed in the light of his resurrection to be rebellion against God.

Jesus' death was therefore the death of the sinner, the death which seals the exclusion from God's nearness, from the source of life. Because Jesus has suffered this death for all, the godforsakenness of death is overcome for all humanity, we need no longer die alone and without hope.

### Humanity

Humanity's role is to recognise the reality we have outlined above, and to live in the light of it; i.e. to live in hope and in openness to the future. We will question later whether this is not in fact a reduction of salvation, like that of Barth and Brunner, to a merely noetic acknowledgement of the existing state of affairs. By such trust human beings can participate in the truth of God.(192) The centrality of Christ to God's revelation and salvation is reflected in his importance as the criterion of salvation: it is on the basis of the individual's reaction to Christ, acceptance or rejection, that he or she is accepted or rejected by God: the essence of all things is decided on the basis of orientation to Christ.(193) Individual decision is necessary and refusal will meet with God's judgment.(194) The decision for Christ is the decision in which one "trustingly takes this event as the ground on which he stands... self-surrender, in the exact, literal sense of a placing of one's reliance entirely upon that to which one entrusts himself."(195)



This decision involves anticipation of the future which is founded in the meaning of the Christ-event, "as it offers itself to knowledge. To this extent, knowledge of the revelatory event establishes the believing trust in which it issues."(196) Human beings must therefore understand the significance of Christ's history, a meaning which is inherent in the event, so that they will know that they are related to the centre of history.(197) True faith is sparked through the open appropriation of the event:

... all truth lies right before the eyes, and ... its appropriation is a natural consequence of the facts. There is no need for any additional perfection of man as though he could not focus on the 'supernatural' truth with his normal equipment for knowing.(198)

It is a truth which is open to general reasonableness. The obvious implication of this is that every individual must involve himself or herself in historical criticism because the meaning of the Christ-event involves an understanding of its historical context, particularly that of apocalypticism. However, Pannenberg says that the ordinary Christian may never come to rational certainty about the truth of Christianity, but may nonetheless assume its vindicability by others in the future:(199) The Church and theologians in particular must work particularly hard in today's climate to make such an assumption possible, "to recover an atmosphere favourable to the reception of the Christian truth, to make belief easier. However the Church should at no point use coercion in its promulgation of God's message because coercion presupposes that human nature is opposed to God's rule, whereas in fact it cannot ultimately be

opposed.(200) This is the continuity between humanity and God commented on above, and to which I will return. In line with this understanding of humanity as basically open and salvation as a "natural" recognition, is the note of optimism in Pannenberg's view of humanity. Although he wants to distinguish this from any kind of "evolutionary optimism", Pannenberg does see the Church as more mature and humanity as "more nearly come of age" with our century, with the general rejection of authoritarianism, and the clear implication is that he sees in process "a truly human integration of life in all dimensions of social activity" of which only God could be the source.(201)

### Sin

There is, however, a problem in all this, in human understanding and acceptance of the message of God's coming Kingdom: sin. For Pannenberg as for Barth, Brunner and Rahner, sin is only really understood from the perspective of salvation, which of course for Pannenberg is the perspective of the future. It is only retrospectively, on the basis of the Christian understanding of ourselves, that we can identify certain structures of behaviour as sinful.

Sin is the common denominator of everything that resists the spirit of transformation into the glory of God. Sin resists this spirit inside the human person... Along with the perishableness of death, therefore, suffering and disease - even before them - sin must be overcome.(202)

However Pannenberg is not happy with many traditional understandings of sin or with the guilt consciousness often seen as a necessary prerequisite for salvation, because of the

growing split between such piety and reality. "Sin" in modern understanding is not the expression of a human being's experience and does not relate to this immediacy of experience, but is its explanation. To overcome the split and connect with reality, Pannenberg calls for a concept of sin which relates to the fundamental non-identity in the human situation due to the tension between egocentricity and self-transcendence: it is this situation that needs overcoming(203), particularly in a situation where people are more aware of meaninglessness than of guilt.(204) Pannenberg is concerned specifically with Barth's understanding of sin and his denial of any connection between Christian statements about sinfulness and empirical data. Although Pannenberg would not try to "prove" the existence of sin - any more than that of God - by empirical observation, he sees the reality of human life as giving witness to the Christian understanding of sin and as verifying, specifically, its universality and radicality. It is the fact that the universality of sin becomes known in the light of the Christian revelation (and as the presupposition of this revelation) which justifies us in looking for the root of human sin in the universal natural conditions of human existence.(205)

Pannenberg pursues this understanding of sin as non-identity, "contradiction", talking of sin as "self-contradiction", the "contradiction" between destiny and actual reality(206), and as connected with the present

"antagonisms" of life, its misery, absurdity, selfishness and acedia.(207) The "contradiction" to self and to destiny is manifested as closedness to the future, distrust and unbelief which result in the building of defences against the future, through seeing it as a prolongation of what exists, rather than the creative origin of reality. Pannenberg also describes this as self-centredness, egocentricity, which is in tension with human self-transcendence.(208) This closedness can prevent the human being from the otherwise natural recognition of the meaning of Jesus' history: it is thus a matter of ignorance or misunderstanding. So Pannenberg says that the will can refuse the voice which calls towards fulfilment of human destiny only when that voice becomes unclear, although unclarity may be characteristic for human behaviour. It also involves error because it mistakes self-centredness for true self-interest which finds fulfilment only in God.(209) In this context Pannenberg claims that a human being can never decide against God as an original, free decision because humanity has an openness towards God, a hidden tendency towards that which can fulfil and because the reply comes from God to the question of human freedom above and beyond every "self-made encasement of mind". So this is not a choice as other finite possibilities: human beings rather "fall" into sin indirectly through their relations to other human beings and to things, as a consequence of their behaviour.

Here they live in fundamental error about themselves, since their true self-interest is not identical with their self-centredness which asserts itself even in dedication to a finite person or task, but which could

find fulfilment only in the openness of the self to God.

This error about humanity's destiny is not seeing it from the perspective of the future, and so Pannenberg speaks of the "self-centredness of temporality"; the tension between self and reality returns also in the contrast between human temporality and eternity.(210) Pannenberg relies very much on Augustine in his understanding of sin as a perversion of human desire which is, in itself, good. Human beings choose sin because of its deceitful nature, thinking that it is good and this mistakenness about what is good and evil is the meaning of the bondage of the will. Evil is thus chosen only ' sub ratione boni: God is rejected because of the view that the idea of God is a human construct; his commandment is scorned because of doubt about what his will is. There is, however, no freedom against good or against God. Evil is only ever chosen unwittingly.

To outside observers the behaviour of such individuals may suggest that they are choosing between what is good for them and in itself and other possibilities and that in the process they forgo the good. Observers can look at the situation in this way because they can judge what has in fact been chosen to be bad or evil. But the persons making the choice cannot but regard the object chosen as good; otherwise they would not have chosen it.(211)

This is closely linked with Pannenberg's understanding of responsibility. Human freedom and responsibility is not a matter of choice between good and evil. Freedom is - in an Augustinian sense - freedom for the good. Human beings' responsibility for their unwitting choice of evil and for sin which is a structure of their being is based not on their ability to do or be otherwise but on the basis of their true

destiny. This also means that the responsibility of humanity to God is founded on the fact that God is the ground of human self-realization, so that responsibility to self is responsibility to God.

Freedom has to do with personal existence as a single whole which manifests itself in individual actions and decisions, with the result that human beings claim their present life situation as their own in the light of their human destiny. Therefore in keeping with their consciousness of their own destination they know themselves to be responsible for their own condition and activity and for turning the natural and social givens of their own life situation into a fulfilment of their destiny.(212)

It is our consciousness that this destiny is really ours which justifies our acceptance of responsibility for the distance between our existence and behaviour and our goal.(213)

In this sense sin is rooted in the structure of human life, its givenness and Pannenberg accepts this as the kernel of truth in the doctrine of "original sin": sin characterises the empirical reality of human existence, - not its essence - in ego-centricity and ego-obstructedness to God.(214)

Pannenberg expounds his understanding of sin as centredness in some detail in Theological Anthropology, drawing quite heavily on Augustine's understanding of concupiscence, and relating this idea strictly to his understanding of human destiny as the image of God. Pannenberg sees human nature as involving a conflict between exocentricity and egocentricity, which is a structure of animal life in general. In humanity this tension takes the form - and this is sin - of pride in

which priority is given to human egocentricity over a destination which transcends self-centred human existence.(215) This is a distortion of human subjectivity and of the natural order of creation as Augustine maintained. It is Kierkegaard's "dread" which is already an expression of sin, and this distortion, which co-determines human behaviour, should be seen as a structural element of human life and behaviour

which is marked by a tension between the centralist organization which human beings share with all animal life and especially with its more highly organized forms, and the exocentric character which is peculiar to human beings.(216)

Sin is thus not first of all something moral, but is closely connected with the natural conditions of our existence. Human beings are therefore sinful by nature, by the natural conditions of their existence, but this does not mean that their nature as human beings is sinful, i.e., their essential nature as exocentric.(217) These structures of hostility to the future are the elements of discontinuity in history and to them the future appears as wrath not forgiveness.(218) It is therefore finitude from which human beings need deliverance:

The experience of finitude has become more radical ... The depth of being now appears as something enigmatic, as an absurdity. It is no longer experienced as an ecstatic expansion of our own being but as a painful limit.(219)

The power of the future - salvation - is thus seen as "the power of contradiction to the present, and releases forces to overcome it. Just for this reason is it able to rescue and preserve."(220)

So, finally, the Church's task is a critique of the structures - social, political and ethical - which are hostile to the future, and the proclamation of the coming Kingdom, and of the understanding of reality

that is inspired not by the past nor by eternal structures but by the power of the future.(221)

### CRITIQUE

The initial impression gained from this brief analysis of Rahner and Pannenberg is that the place each of them gives to the idea of sin is very much determined by their metaphysical interests and ideas of humanity and salvation: this impression is reinforced by further consideration. Both are very concerned about unity and continuity, the unity of reality and of knowledge, and these emphases have significant effects on the doctrine of sin, which I will consider broadly in two sections. The first will be concerned with the effects of the understanding of humanity which we have seen in Rahner and Pannenberg's thought; the second with those of their understandings of salvation - both of these of course needing to be seen within the larger framework we have sketched in our analysis.

Rahner and Pannenberg share a vigorous concern for apologetics firstly because they see the need for a better



relationship between theology and the world and secondly because humanity is methodologically central to both their theologies. This apologetic emphasis is welcome and undeniably necessary for the Church. However the way in which they see their theology as relating to everyday human life is open to question. Rahner's transcendental method depends heavily on his understanding of the human being as the transcendent knower, an understanding which he sees as self-evident. The influence of Jaspers' idea of boundary-situations is evident, an idea which Barth criticised, denying that knowledge of our knowledge can lead beyond the view of ourselves as natural phenomena, or that looking at the "frontier" situations of death and conflict can lead to any knowledge of true humanity.(222) These criticisms also apply to Rahner, as Barth questions why such situations should give meaning to life because human beings, as often as not, pass through many of these situations quite unaffected, they are not intrinsically bearers of the mystery of transcendence and life. It is quite possible to react to such conflicts with rebellion, lethargy or boredom. Barth claims that the existential thinker attaches too much importance to self-transcendence to fob us off with assurances about the wholly other. Although it can demonstrate humanity's openness, Barth demands evidence for the assertion that human existence is actualised only through this proposed relation to the transcendent. This parallels Pannenberg's criticism specifically of Rahner that theological anthropology cannot take us beyond a demonstration of humanity's openness to God.(223)

There are criticisms of Rahner's methodology and transcendent anthropology which are not in themselves at issue here and which require far more lengthy discussion. What is at issue here is the effect of this methodology in terms of Rahner's concept of sin. As I have indicated this methodology is open to criticism in that it may have insufficient grounds for asserting the connection between the transcendent self and knowledge of God or of mystery, or between the definition of humanity as transcendent, and human experience of life as meaningless or despairing. The criticism which arises more directly from this thesis is that it asserts a metaphysical and epistemological continuity between God and humanity which does not leave sufficient room for sin, and is thus likely to be inadequately related to the way humanity is. Rahner asserts that Adam's fall has affected humanity, but it is not clear what this effect is. Although, as we have noted, original sin is called "sin" only analogously, the Genesis "saga" is seen by Rahner as an explanation of the continual, at least partial determination of the human situation by the objectification of guilt.(224) However this determination is severely limited in what it can mean by the determinative continuity noted above: continuity is the bottom-line definition of humanity in a way which is central to Rahner's methodology and sin therefore cannot be discontinuity. A human being has an awareness of transcendence and Rahner makes this awareness unfalsifiable by asserting that it is unconscious: humanity is unconsciously Christian. Whilst acknowledging the truth of the idea of the

ambiguity of human actions and the impossibility of ultimately knowing true decision and action from the results of determination and co-determination, this notion seems to be true neither to human beings' experience of themselves nor to the New Testament idea of the Christian faith which is emphatically seen as a matter of decision and commitment rather than as a natural, implicit or unconscious state of being. To assume such a state of being assumes that sin either has been dealt with, so that it does not affect this state, or that it has no real power anyway, that it does not matter. Again, sin is limited to ignorance of humanity's true status.

To question the "anonymous Christian" thesis on the grounds of sin is also to question whether a human being can come to true knowledge of God only through knowledge of himself or herself. Rahner is assuming that because human abilities and activities involve human beings in a domain that only God can explain, then by that fact a human being acknowledges God: this is not a necessary or obvious conclusion, particularly if we take account of sin. Rahner cannot take up the potential of his anthropological apologetic for demonstrating human beings' need in terms of their lack of fulfilment, their frustration and anxiety, at least as prolegomena for the Christian proclamation, because these symptoms are subsumed within the human being's relation to God. It is ironic that a theology which is so concerned to connect with human beings' understanding of

themselves should have so little real place for the experience of alienation and despair, such as many existentialist thinkers recognise.

One reason for this is that Rahner's understanding of humanity (though still an understanding of humanity per se) is of humanity as redeemed: it is also an effect of his understanding of salvation, the already-inaugurated ontological divinisation of humanity, salvation which is one with creation. Although Rahner does not speak of creation as the overcoming of chaos as such, creation and incarnation are one act of grace and there is a sense in which creation is salvation for Rahner: it is at least the beginning of the process of salvation, as in the chaos myth of the beginning. However this overlaps with the tragic influence in Rahner's understanding of the "prison van" of finite existence, and in his distinction between essence and existence. What Rahner says here is not clear: on the one hand he wants to distinguish between the essence of humanity, the potentia obedientialis which is already fulfilled in Christ, and the human being's finite existence - this is certainly very close to the tragic myth - on the other hand, he says that grace penetrates both, humanity as concrete existent being is determined by the supernatural act which is not different from the natural.

In terms of Rahner's metaphysics of humanity there is room for an understanding of sin as determinative, in terms of sinful existence as opposed to essence, although such an understanding would be tragic or gnostic, rather than Christian if sin were to be tied so closely to existence as such: theologically there is no room for sin because of the supralapsarian nature of salvation, which in turn affects Rahner's theological anthropology: sinful, finite existence is also permeated by grace from the very beginning, even from before the fall. If we were to reconstruct the myth of the beginning which is implied by this it could be a synthesis of the chaotic and the tragic and the Adamic, whereby creation is effectively salvation, but that which the human being is saved from is guilty and finite existence. This is reinforced by Rahner's rejection of the historical states of humanity as created, fallen and redeemed. It is highly significant that Rahner feels the need to defend himself from the charge of pantheism or gnosticism in his view of humanity as created to make God's self-communication possible. According to my argument above such a defence is certainly necessary because the continuity between God and humanity, established by creation and salvation, seems to subsume human nature as sinful and thus, to some degree, independent. Rahner's defence is that humanity is free, however this freedom is dubious because of humanity's determination by grace.(225)

Rahner does want to preserve human choice, the ability to reject God, and with it the "not yet" of salvation, but this is the point at which sin involves paradox for him: the possibility of rejecting God is a contradiction, because God has already decided the outcome of history. This resort to contradiction is an inadequate if genuine attempt to preserve human freedom, and with it the reality of sin, because of the weight of all Rahner's statements about the supralapsarian economy of salvation by which creation is salvation, which is thus achieved before the fall. It is also about God's decision in Christ about the outcome of history, in the light of which judgment and perdition are always "relegated to brackets" as the fear which commands hope, not as a possibility demonstrated by its fulfilment: our status in Christ is "terminative" if not at present fully determinative. Although Rahner continually appends a caution against doing away with human freedom to choose, this is what he does in practice(226), in his affirmation of the victory of God's freedom and forgiving love even over the refusal of his creatures.(227) This is the "soteriological" continuity between God and humanity. The conflict is thus really external to humanity, it is already resolved purely by God's grace. Even the dualism between essence and existence is not really determinative, and although there may be uncertainty about the future because of the impossibility of distinguishing between free and determined action, this uncertainty is within the framework of the fulfilment of humanity, and the decision about humanity already

taken in Christ. Christ is, and has achieved the assumption of human nature by God. So sin and human freedom are thus an affirmed part of Rahner's theology, the paradox of the enslaved will which Ricoeur isolates as central to the Adamic myth, is lost and sin is seen as paradoxical only in brackets alongside freedom, because of the efficacy of God's victorious salvation and because of the place this gives humanity within creation and as the transcendent knower of God. The muttered appendix "without destroying human freedom", however often repeated, is not allowed to affect either the certainty of universal salvation, or humanity's status and role in its concrete existence as well as in its essential nature, as constituted by God's grace. Rahner's understanding here is close to that of Barth and subject to the same criticism in terms of implicit universalism.(228)

As we saw, humanity is also central methodologically for Pannenberg as the questioning subject. I would dispute, however, whether his description of the human being as essentially open and always questioning is a sufficiently comprehensive description. Pannenberg sees human beings as basically constituted by openness, always searching, and their appropriation of the truth, which follows from their understanding of history, is a "natural" process. Pannenberg is here also relying on continuity between God and humanity. While his anthropology enables him to enter into important debate with

contemporary anthropologies, his assumption of human ability to interpret events correctly without accompanying explanation or interpretation can only be methodologically determined. This element of continuity lies behind Pannenberg's ascription of responsibility to the human being wholly on the basis of a recognition of one's true destiny. He asserts that human beings do recognise what their destiny is and therefore accept responsibility for it. Human beings develop a reflective relation to themselves and to ultimate unity which renders conceptual categorization possible, and they have at every point a knowledge of transcendent mystery.(229) This assertion requires further substantiation or explanation in the face of the common human experiences of alienation and misunderstanding. This also raises the question which Pannenberg does not deal with (because he assumes this recognition) of whether a human being is guilty if they fail to recognise their true human destiny. There is some recognition of this in Pannenberg's allowance for us to rely on other people's validation of the truth, but it seems to me that with this allowance Pannenberg loses much of his case against subjectivism, at least in its application to more than an intellectually aware élite. This seems to be something of an "armchair anthropology" which lacks a genuine awareness of our contemporary culture. It is an anthropology which certainly has adverse consequences for sin: its postulation of continuity between God and humanity, so that human belief follows naturally from the (natural) recognition of revelation in history, debars sin from being discontinuity such



that a human being cannot or will not recognise revelation and cannot or will not believe.(230)

In terms of his anthropology, because the appropriation of truth is an indirect process, mediated through history and dependent on the exercise of human abilities (but not inherent in that exercise) there does seem to be real room for the freedom in human response which is necessary for sin. There is a conflict within the human being between openness or closedness to the future. It is defined as that which resists the future, ego-centricity, which may include, but is much more than, human selfishness. As such, however, it is not a decision the human being takes, or an act of wilful rebellion, but it is a mistakenness about where the fulfilment of human destiny or desires lies. Human nature cannot ultimately be opposed to God, we cannot consciously choose against God. Pannenberg does want to maintain both the voluntary character of sin and its rootedness in the natural conditions of human existence and maintains that sin, as a perpetuation of natural centrality, accomplished in the will, does not befall the will as a fate which is alien to it.(231) However it is a fate in the sense of being unavoidable and being linked to the choice of will only unwittingly. It seems that Pannenberg emphasises the rootedness of sin in human nature at the expense of the voluntary nature of sin, and this weakening of the voluntary is furthered by the determinative nature of the future destiny of humanity.

Pannenberg's idea of sin is commonly criticised as not allowing the possibility of self-abandonment as sin(232), and his theology is seen as not adequately dealing with the problem of a fallen creation.(233) Secularism is seen as impossible for Pannenberg because finite humanity is already "in touch" with God and faith is a correct technique of historical investigation for finding him.(234) The charge that Pannenberg's salvation is purely noetic may not be entirely fair, as he specifically points out that faith is not knowledge, but trust based on knowledge, and that in Scripture knowledge is a far broader concept than our current understanding. However it is purely noetic in the sense that it is a matter of recognising an already-established state of affairs. Sin is not a threat to this process of recognition because the resultant reconciliation is established from the future in Christ, despite the possibility of an unwitting deviation on the part of the human being.(235)

A more fundamental problem in Pannenberg's understanding of sin arises from his metaphysical framework. Firstly there is the metaphysical distinction between essence and existence (appearance) by which sin becomes something affecting only human existence, but not humanity's essence. We noted that Rahner's view of finite existence is almost a gnostic or tragic view of imprisonment, except that this realm is also determined by the supernatural. Pannenberg shares the same "tragic" tendencies in

seeing finite existence as that from which humanity needs rescue, particularly because it involves a temporally bound and therefore incomplete understanding of reality. If human beings could see the unity of history they would understand and would trust the future as a natural process. Because of their position within time, their finitude, they cannot see the whole and therefore cannot have true knowledge: it is really finitude from which they need rescue. This bears more similarity to the orphic myth which Ricoeur outlines, than to the Christian anthropological myth where humanity needs rescuing from sin, which includes human rebellion, but not from existence itself.

Problems arise also with the effects of Pannenberg's view of salvation on his view of sin, insofar as for him also salvation is already achieved. Pannenberg does not talk specifically about God achieving human acceptance of salvation as do Barth and Rahner. However it is an essential part of his metaphysics not only that Christ is the fulfilment of human destiny for openness, that he has dealt with sin, receiving its punishment for humanity and thus abolishing it(236), but that he is the anticipation of the future, God's future and purpose for humanity. In him we can see beforehand what the future will be, a future in which all will be taken into sonship. There is some ambiguity here because Pannenberg does accept the possibility of judgment in this future, dependent on the human response to Christ, while talking about the fulfilment and salvation of all

humanity. Again, emphasis is given to the unity of salvation, not to the possibility of being lost, by Pannenberg's other ideas and by the structure of his theology. It is the unity of the history of salvation, of revelation, which is important and which is revealed and thus inaugurated in Christ. Pannenberg's thought does seem to lead towards a universalism which he himself would not want to espouse.

Not only is the unity of history revealed in Christ, but it is revealed as determinative of the present. A notoriously difficult aspect of Pannenberg's thought is the question of the priority of the future which, it seems clear, Pannenberg does want to insist is ontological as well as epistemological. Christ's history does not merely reveal what will be, he establishes what will be - the reign of God - and what will be is determinative for the present. This must mean that humanity is saved. If Christ is the anticipation of humanity's final essence then he must also, as the power of the future, be the determination of humanity's final essence. Resurrection is the content of salvation, the verdict of acceptance on the death Christ died on behalf of blasphemous humanity, and the resurrection has been revealed as being humanity's future. This is seen in the unity of creation and eschatology in Christ which "assigns" eschatological perfection to creation and humanity. This is why the human being in his or her sinfulness is in conflict with actual reality, as well as with their

destiny.(237) Once again the sinner seems to occupy some kind of reality other than that which is real, as for Barth. The conflict of sin thus becomes, for Pannenberg, not so much a conflict in humanity as a dualism between its exocentric nature, its destiny as the image of God, that is, its essential nature, and its egocentric nature which is part of human animal existence, creatureliness. It is not a conflict in the will because the the will, though it may be mistaken, is directed to the good. It is also a conflict of humanity with itself, and only in consequence with God.

In this eschatological orientation Pannenberg wishes to detach himself entirely from the mythical way of thinking which sees the primal past as the basis and aim of reality. He wants to reach beyond the tension between the two ways of thought in Scripture. This is not unlike Rahner's rejection of the successive stages in the human status before God, and has similarly unacceptable results. In reaching beyond this tension, Pannenberg loses the very tension which is essential to the doctrine of sin. To be sure the tension between the two in the New Testament involves the fact that it is the future which is aimed at, and which is already in some way present, rather than the recovery of the past. However the creation story throughout tradition has, in some way or other, established and explained the reality of sinful humanity as a real obstacle to God's plans for the future of the world: sin is a reality which

is not derived solely from the fact of redemption. We noted that Pannenberg does describe Genesis as aetiological, but he does not explain what this means. In failing to consider the question of whether God or humanity is responsible for sin, and in leaving Genesis out of his positive account of sin, Pannenberg leaves himself open to the interpretation that God creates humanity already sinful, Deus causa peccati, and that the overcoming of this already sinful nature is a necessary part of human development. In doing away with the tension between past and present, mythology and eschatology (except the ambivalent persistence of this tension in terms of appearance, which is however also determined by the future) Pannenberg effectively denies the determining power of sin on human history or on the ultimate future, on essential human nature. Pannenberg's exposition of centredness in Theological Anthropology is valuable and should certainly be seen as part of what sin means, but in limiting sin to this aspect Pannenberg has lost a significant part of the Christian understanding of sin, in particular its nature as a conflict, not merely a non-identity, within humanity, and between humanity and God. This problem is maybe reflected in the ambiguity in Pannenberg over whether or not sin is evil. He says both that human weakness which is manifested as sinfulness can be described as evil only in view of its extreme consequences in hatred of God and of one's fellow human beings, and that sin is evil even in its root.(238)

In conclusion, the content and significance of sin is radically constricted in both Rahner's and Pannenberg's thought because of the methodological place they give humanity (ie. the significance of the human being as the knower of God, a role which is dependent on continuity between God and humanity) and because of the over-determination of their metaphysical frameworks in which human essence and existence are already determined as such by salvation. A continuity is asserted between humanity and God in terms of human transcendence and openness, which makes the recognition of revelation and resultant belief in and knowledge of God into a natural process; also in terms of the human status as already saved. Sin cannot therefore mean discontinuity in these areas of metaphysics, epistemology and soteriology. The only room which is left for it is in the ambiguous and unchristian idea of tragic "existence", which does not defend the Deus non causa peccati, and that of "appearance" as opposed to "essence"; as we have seen, even this role for sin is inadequate as it, too, is not a real determination of humanity. An understanding of sin as a "tensive symbol" (see Chapter 5 p274f and Chapter 6 pp284ff below) incorporating some of Ricoeur's insights could, again, be helpful in the construction of a doctrine of sin which would avoid the tendencies exhibited in Rahner and Pannenberg's thought. As we noted in Chapter 3 (p.117ff) careful exposition of the fall narrative as part of the symbolism of sin, with its distinction between the events of creation and salvation and its emphasis on human responsibility for sin, would guard against an

unacceptably tragic view of existence which not only denies the reality of human freedom but also implies that God is responsible for sin. Such an understanding of sin, taking the paradox of freedom and determination to be essential and determinative of human existence, would also safeguard the reality of sin and the impotence of human beings, their freedom and their role in salvation. A correct appreciation of the breadth of the meaning of sin, as a symbol invoking a range of ideas, corresponding to the breadth of human experience, would prevent any undue restriction of the significance of sin whereby it does not ultimately affect human will or reason which is good (as for Pannenberg), or whereby it comes to mean no more than mistakenness about the true state of affairs, or it is relegated to some strange, different level of reality.

An understanding such as this, which will be discussed further in the following two chapters, would not only account more fully for human experience but would correspond to a more satisfactory account of salvation. In contrast to this project, sin functions for both Rahner and Pannenberg, as part of the explanation of why salvation is necessary and why salvation is not yet complete, but it is not allowed to determine the understanding either of humanity or of salvation in any significant way and the paradox which always accompanies the idea of sin is located in its very reality or possibility,



rather than contributing to a deeper understanding of what sin is.

CHAPTER FOUR FOOTNOTES

1. Grace in Freedom, p.169f.
2. Theological Investigations (TI) Chs.1, esp. p.33 and Ch.3.
3. Sacramentum Mundi (SM) 6, p.65 cf. Foundations of the Christian Faith (FCF) p.117f, cf. TI.18, p.102.
4. God's transcendence and immanence are not two "movements" or "modes" but are inseparable. As the self-communicating ground of the world God is at once both immanent and transcendent. FCF p.87, cf. SM5, p.348f.
5. SM5, p.348ff.
6. Grace in Freedom, p.174.
7. TI, IX, p.193.
8. TI, IX, p.28ff.
9. Hearers of the Word, Ch.3, from A Rahner Reader, ed. G.A.McCool, p.7.
10. FCF p.73.
11. The Achievement of Karl Rahner, L.Roberts, p.32f.
12. FCF p.21.
13. L.Roberts, p.18.
14. *ibid*, p.20.
15. Hearers of the Word, A Rahner Reader, p.14.
16. *ibid*, p.16. Cf. FCF p.20f, 31ff.
17. *ibid*, p.21.
18. TI, IX, p.191.
19. *ibid*. p.35.
20. TI, VI, p.9.
21. J.J.Bacik, Mystagogy and the Eclipse of Mystery, p.109.

22. TI, IX.2, p.45.
23. TI, XVI, p.55.
24. FCF p.132f & 165f, cf. SM2, p.310f. God's self-revelation in his Word has thus a different though higher divine quality than "natural" indirect revelation through creation because in it general revelation attains full self-awareness in a historically objective form, manifests itself in language and so authenticates itself. SM5, p.356.
25. TI, IX, p.42.
26. SM3, p.369.
27. TI, XVI, p.245ff.
28. Grace in Freedom, p.191f.
29. Cf. Christian at the Crossroads, p.22f.
30. FCF p.64.
31. TI, XVIII, p.94.
32. FCF p.116.
33. TI, IX, p.181ff.
34. SM2, p.415.
35. SM5, p.355, FCF p.123.
36. SM5, p.65.
37. FCF p.124.
38. SM3, p.370.
39. FCF p.124. Matter is the condition which makes possible the objective other of world and humanity: the condition for the otherness which estranges human beings from themselves and in doing so brings themselves to themselves. FCF p.183.
40. TI, XI, p.272ff.
41. FCF p.27ff.
42. SM2 p.361f.
43. TI, XI, p.246f.

44. FCF p.97.
45. TI, VII, p.287-91.
46. SM2, p.362, Grace in Freedom, p.203ff.
47. Grace in Freedom, p.229.
48. SM5, p.406.
49. Nature and Grace, p.127.
50. Revelation and Tradition, p.99.
51. *ibid*, p.111.
52. L.Roberts, The Achievement of Karl Rahner, p.111.
53. FCF p.225.
54. SM3, p.203.
55. FCF p.454. "The eschatological climax of God's historical self-communication, in which this self-consciousness becomes manifest as irrevocable and victorious is called Jesus Christ."
56. Christ must be shown not just as the answer but "as the very question which man is." SM2, p.310ff.
57. TI, XVIII, p.143ff. cf.SM5, p.349.
58. TI, II, p.94ff. The continued presence of the pneuma of freedom is in the Church.
59. L.Roberts, p.112.
60. TI, XVIII, p.157ff.
61. Grace in Freedom, p.118. In this process death - the manifestation of the refusal of God's love - is transformed into an expression of love in obedience to death. So in Christ death dies, *ibid*, p.125. Rahner accepts the "satisfaction theory" of redemption as a statement of the saving meaning of Christ's death (without the mythological ideas of ransom, vicarious punishment etc.) a statement of the loving obedience of the Son in whom God loves and forgives sinners, but not as a legalistic theory which sees the cross as the cause of gratuitous love not its manifestation. SM5, p.429ff.
62. Grace in Freedom, p.120.

63. L.Roberts, p.114.
64. Grace in Freedom, p.225.
65. TI, XIII, p.215. Redemption for Christianity is objective, an event with a result ontologically prior to the justification and sanctification of men and women and consequently to be distinguished from it. SM5, p.425ff.
66. SM5, p.408.
67. SM2, p.416.
68. TI, XVIII, p.103.
69. TI, XIII, p.215.
70. FCF p119.
71. SM4, p.328ff. Rahner here critiques Augustine's view as not seeing Christ's death in this structural way. cf. n.68 above.
72. TI, II, p.57n.
73. TI, IX, p.30.  
 "... man is on the lookout for the absolute bringer of salvation and affirms, at least implicitly in every total act of his nature directed by grace to the immediate presence of God as his goal, that he has already come or will come in the future." SM3, p.195.  
 Cf. p.194, there is a "spontaneous, unanalysed 'inquiring Christology' really operative in each human being."
74. SM2, p.310.
75. SM3, p.208f.  
 "Grace which enfolds man, the sinner and the unbeliever too, as his very sphere of existence which he can never escape from." Nature and Grace, p.134.
76. SM3, p.208f.
77. TI, II, p.95. Cf. SM3, p.209, salvation is for all, provided it is not rejected in personal guilt; p.368f, the sinner and unbeliever can shut themselves off without implicitly affirming what they are overtly denying; SM6, p.94, the possibility of eternal loss is a possibility which must be reckoned with for the free agent. Cf. also FCF p.97f, SM2, p.306f.
78. Grace in Freedom, p.208.

79. SM5, p.408. Rahner sees the modern process of secularisation as a stage in the world's divinisation, L.Roberts p.111. Cf. SM5, p.424. In the New Testament the history of human freedom is no longer open, the dialectic between salvation and loss is already decided (without detriment to human freedom).
80. SM5, p.408.
81. TI, XVIII, p.103.
82. SM5, p.437.
83. SM6, p.174, cf. FCF p.90f.
84. TI, XI, p.257ff.
85. FCF p.115. Cf. TI, II, p.136, the essence of sin is offence against God.
86. FCF p.111f.
87. TI, II, p.260.
88. Cf. H.Haag, "The Original Sin Discussion 1966-1971", and J.L.Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches", p.218 n.8.
89. TI, I, Ch.8, "Theological Reflexions on Monogenism", p.233.
90. Also in SM4, and in "Evolution and Original Sin", 1967.
91. TI, II, p.257.
92. *ibid*, p.259.
93. SM4, p.332.
94. *ibid*.
95. TI, I, p.350.
96. TI, I, p.369 cf. p.368f: "In the concrete man of the present order free personal decision and self-determination are not capable of perfectly and exhaustively determining the operative subject throughout the whole extent of his being... There is much in man which always remains in concrete fact somehow impersonal; impenetrable and unilluminated for his existential decision; merely endured and not freely acted out.
97. SM5, p.427.

98. Grace in Freedom, p.118 cf. p.200.  
Cf. also Christian at the Crossroads, p.22, Rahner talks of biological and historical existence as opaque, burdensome, not soluble into mystery-giving transparency, short, full of pain and helplessness; in TI, IX, p.194 he talks of the "ultimate agony" of human finitude and in TI, XVII, p.27, of the "bitterly finite" character of Jesus as a man.
99. Christian at the Crossroads, p.34; Grace in Freedom, p.201.  
In SM5, p.425f, Rahner talks of the human need for redemption as the experience of being incomplete, ambiguous and full of suffering, and he says that even a finite, guiltless human being would have felt the pain of incompleteness as a deficiency. It is as personally sinful, of course, that humanity needs the forgiveness given in God's acceptance of Christ, but this is not an aspect which Rahner emphasises at all. Indeed he says that it is not advisable to distinguish too definitely between the grace of God as supernatural divinization and sanctification and the grace of God as forgiveness of guilt: these are two elements of God's one self-communication which, within its historical course, comprises guilt in order, by overcoming it, to show us a love even greater in its power. SM5, p.427.
100. Nature and Grace, p.137.
101. TI, I, p.298ff.
102. TI, I, p.302.
103. Nature and Grace, p.135.
104. TI, II.I, p.80f.
105. SM5, p.435ff.
106. TI, XVII, p.63. Rahner notes that he follows up these individual statements without falsely trying to relate them.
107. Christian at the Crossroads, p.32.
108. p.15f, 38f.
109. Theology and the Kingdom of God (TKG), p.97.
110. Basic Questions in Theology (BQ) p.198ff; Theological Anthropology (TA) p.11f.
111. J.J.Bacik, Mystagogy and the Eclipse of Mystery, p.56. Cf. C.E. Braaten, "The Current Controversy on Revelation, Pannenberg and his Critics", p.226; also A.D.Galloway, "The

New Hegelians".

112. in Revelation as History (RH).
113. RH, p.4ff, Faith and Reason (FR), p.52.
114. BQ3, p.157 n.36.
115. BQ2, p.103 n.51. A specific application of this is in Pannenberg's Christology, Jesus God and Man (GM), where he insists that knowledge of the living Christ is not derived in the first instance from direct, present-day experience in association with the living Lord because we cannot be certain of such experiences nor distinguish them from self-delusion. Faith has primarily to do with what Jesus was, which is the basis of our knowledge of what he is today, and Christology is therefore concerned with asking and showing the extent to which the history of Jesus substantiates faith in Jesus. p.25ff.
116. BQ2, p.104.
117. RH, p.ix.
118. TKG p.58, cf.p.54.
119. BQ1, Ch.1.
120. FR, p.90ff. Here Pannenberg indicates what direction a theological approach to history might take.
121. BQ1, p.14f. Cobb notes that Pannenberg is not the only theologian to be protesting against the fideistic elements in neo-orthodoxy, but his distinction is in his affirmation as the most reasonable belief of that which others presuppose could only be asserted on the basis of faith (particularly the resurrection). "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Jesus God and Man", p.193.
122. TA,p.384.
123. BQ3, p.104.
124. What is Man? (WM) p.62f.
125. RH, p.13.
126. BQ1, pp.211ff. Pannenberg allows that if doxological statements are recognised as being doxological, they may permit conclusions leading to other doxological statements, but caution should be expressed. Concluding from one predicate of God to another can only really demonstrate the connection between various doxological statements, each of which must be grounded in a historical experience of God's



activity. p.218n.

127. BQ1, p.237.

128. GM, p.185f.

129. Hörer des Wortes, p.198, cited BQ2, p.106.

130. BQ2, p.107.

131. WM, p.139.

132. "A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg".

133. GM, p.193.

134. Human Nature, Election and History, (HNEH) p.15ff, cf. BQ2, p.232; BQ3, p.113; TKG, p.119ff.

135. BQ2, p.225ff, cf. WM p.8ff.

136. TKG, awareness of the future, different from relation to it, is limited to humanity, p.68.

137. FR, p.36f.

138. BQ3, p.106, cf. BQ2, p.189f; BQ3, p.88f.  
 "Otherwise all their assertions, however impressive, about the primacy of the goodness of God will remain purely subjective assumptions without any serious claim to universal validity. Such has been the sad fate of dialectical theology and in particular the theology of Barth.", TA p.16. Pannenberg notes that the very rejection of anthropology by dialectical theology is a form of dependence on anthropological presuppositions, defenceless against the suspicion that its faith is something arbitrarily legislated by human beings.

139. WM, p.11, cf. BQ3, Ch.2.

140. TA p.284.

141. BQ2, p.2, GM p.84f.

142. HNEH Ch.1. Cf. FR, p.39f, on the derivation of the idea of personality from biblical thought.

143. BQ2, p.99. Cf. BQ3, p.93f, the necessity of a theological anthropology dealing at appropriate length with different anthropological fields and with their implications for the religious dimension of human experience.

144. FR, p.64, cf. BQ1, p.141. Because of the universality of Jesus' claims, what is required is "confession by the

totality of man's experience of reality at any time whatever".

145. TKG p.61.
146. TA, p.66ff. It is interesting to note a similar understanding of humanity as determined by their destiny in P. Burke, "Man without Christ: An Approach to Hereditary Sin" (1968). Burke speaks of human destiny to the kingdom of God as the basic determinant of the quality of human existence.
147. BQ3, p.94ff, cf. BQ2, p.221f, and 101f: "For modern man, however, whose relationship to nature is determined by the modern, natural sciences, there is no longer any direct way from the facts of nature to the idea of God... As long as this kind (i.e. anthropological) of argument deals only with statements about the structure of human existence, the question about the independently existing reality of God or of divine powers remains still open."
148. FR, p.12.
149. BQ1, p.22.
150. TA, p.492ff.
151. TA, p.525.
152. TKG, p.62.
153. BQ3, p.112ff, cf. TKG Ch.1.
154. TKG p.63.
155. TKG p.56f. Cf. BQ2, p.245f. Futurity itself, as the condition of freedom, constitutes the very core of the personal, in contrast to pure being, "because it touches every present concretely as its future in the possibilities of its transformation."
156. BQ2, p.181, FR, p.59.
157. Christian Spirituality and the Sacramental Community (CSSC), p.107. Cf. TKG p.111ff.
158. TA, p.515.
159. BQ1, p.79, cf. TKG p.64f.
160. GM p.168f cf, p.230.
161. BQ3 Ch.1. esp. p.21ff & p.25. Cf. TKG p.141. Pannenberg notes the persistence of this unresolved tension

in the New Testament assertions about Christ as mediator of creation, GM p.393.

162. FR, p.17.

163. Pannenberg does note that the function of Jesus for the early Church is reminiscent of the archetypal elements of myth, BQ3, p.68, cf. BQ3, p.133.

164. BQ2, p.243.

165. TA, p.495.

166. HNEH, p.13.

167. GM p.396.

168. *ibid*, p.12.

169. *ibid*, p.53ff, 108ff, 133ff.

170. TKG p.50.

171. TKG p.126.

172. WM p.145ff, 148

173. BQ2, p.232. Cf. RH, p.134 - in Christ the end of history, at one with the essence of God, is experienced in anticipation. God is thus experienced as God and as in control, and not only is he thus known to be so, it is thus that he is so.

174. TKG p.133.

175. BQ1, p.243.

176. GM p.195, 205.

177. p.345. Cf. HNEH, p.24: "That in Jesus Christ the destiny of man is rooted - although not yet in its universal efficacy for all men - was expressed in biblical language by calling Christ the Image of God."

178. TA, p.499. Pannenberg is here expounding Ignatius and Irenaeus, but this does seem to be his own view and is consistent with his thought elsewhere. He sees this understanding of Christ as part of the transition in Christian thought from an understanding of human "nature" as a timeless essence to an understanding of salvation history.

179. BQ2, p.156.

180. TKG p.81 & 86ff.
181. TKG p.117, 119f, p.135. Cf. GM p.150. Jesus' unity with God must be understood as unity with God's eternal essence.
182. BQ1, p.168f: "...the anticipatory character of naming essences implies a peculiar form of agreement between thought and being which again emerges in concrete substantiations only in the form of anticipations whose final truth remains a theme of eschatology."
183. HNEH p.24. Cf. BQ2, p.243: Jesus is "the one who by the future of his Lordship is alone powerful over the present world and decisive for its meaning, its 'essence'".
184. TA p.104f.
185. GM p.390, 192.
186. *ibid*, p.396. Cf. p.245, Jesus' death, as his resurrection, sent to him as "Fate" to be suffered and accepted, not his own active accomplishment.
187. HNEH p.1, 36.
188. GM p.245ff.
189. Christian Spirituality and the Sacramental Community, p.42.
190. GM p.280.
191. GM p.245ff. With Jesus' resurrection the law is also revealed to be an inadequate expression of God's will and Jesus' conflict is thus seen to be with the law itself. He is thus the end of the law, p.256.
192. BQ2, p.24.
193. GM p.391. NB, the context of this is that all things are created through - i.e. predestined to - Christ.
194. TKG p.124, cf. p.116, GM p.191.
195. BQ2, p.37.
196. p.45.
197. WM p.149.
198. RH p.136.
199. W.Hamilton in New Frontiers in Theology III, p.231f.

200. TKG p.78. The reference is to the Church striving for the unity among humanity which is necessary for God's rule: the same principle is involved. Cf. also Hamilton, p.231f.
201. TKG pp.90,95,115 cf p.82. The function of the Church is to try to confront and change the existing political and social structures which are inadequate for human fulfilment: if they wereadequate there would be no need, the kingdom of God would be present in its completeness.
202. CSSC, p.108, cf.110.
203. *ibid*, Ch.1. esp. p.27f.
204. Pannenberg sees this particularly as a call for theology to become involved in the whole range of philosophical topics rather than just in the questions of guilt and forgiveness and ethics. BQ3, p.126.
205. TA, p.91f and 134f.
206. GM p.326.
207. TKG p.88f.
208. TKG p.27f, p.69. Cf. WM p.62; CSSC p.27; RH p.136ff; HNEH p.26. This idea of sin as "contradiction" links up with that of salvation as unity, which is very important for Pannenberg. Cf. HNEH p.36, 108, GM p.88.
209. GM p.352ff.
210. WM p.75 cf. 68f.
211. TA, p.117.
212. *ibid*, p.115.
213. *ibid*. p.152.
214. GM p.361 cf. WM p.65f.
215. TA p.95.
216. *ibid*. p.105.
217. *ibid*. p.107.
218. TKG p.26.
219. BQ2, p.236.
220. BQ2, p.243.

221. TKG p.116.
222. CD III/2, 44, p.110ff.
223. Also apposite is Barth's critique of Schleiermacher's "theology and proclamation of the subjective feelings of pious man", CD II/1, 27, p.193f.
224. Cf. J.N.King, p.55, cf. SM4, p.330.
225. FCF p.124.
226. SM5, p.410ff, SM5, p.424, TI,I, p.302.
227. SM5, p.426. God is the absolute contradiction of such a refusal.
228. Cf. Chapter Three, p.127ff.
229. TA, p.383.
230. I will give the question of theological anthropology some further consideration in Chapter Six.
231. TA p.109.
232. A.D. Galloway, p.24ff.
233. Berkouwer, Half a Century of Theology, p.177f. Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, p.300f.
234. Hamilton, New Frontiers.
235. In Christ as the Word of God the definitive future is announced so that although this future is still hidden from every historical present, in its communication it is present by its own choice. TA p.396.
236. It is possibly significant, though not enough to be stressed, that he talks of the abolition of sinful flesh in particular. GM p.363.
237. GM p.79, p.326.
238. TA p.145.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PAUL RICOEUR

Having examined the doctrine of sin in the thought of Barth, Brunner, Rahner and Pannenberg, and having considered the problems associated with the doctrine and the effects on it of differing approaches we will now look in greater detail at the work of Paul Ricoeur. As Ricoeur is a philosopher, not a theologian, the material with which we will be dealing is quite different from that of the preceding two chapters and the sub-headings will be correspondingly divergent. Ricoeur's work is, however, of great theological interest as we have suggested in our analysis in chapters 3 and 4.

Ricoeur is concerned with sin for two related reasons. Firstly, he is engaged in the wider project of a philosophy of the will, seeking to explore the nature and potential of the human subject. This project leads him to an exploration of fallibility and fault - i.e. sin - as a "dislocation" and "wounding" of the subject, and as thus affecting the human quest for understanding. Secondly, as part of this philosophy of the will, Ricoeur examines the nature and role of language, which is important because it makes explicit and provides access to being, a reality which is not immediately available. This interest in language leads Ricoeur to his analysis of sin and evil as the best example of the process of symbolisation whereby human

beings express and interpret their fundamental reality.(1)

While Ricoeur ascribes great significance to the human experience of alienation he assumes a more basic meaningfulness within existence. Ricoeur's "central intuition" or pre-philosophical experience is that existence and being are ultimately meaningful, there is a surplus of meaning over meaninglessness.(2) Although "existence" here does not have Pannenberg's technical meaning of existence as opposed to essence, it incorporates this meaning. Ricoeur is affirming the meaning of existence as human beings experience it in their estrangement and guilt. He is particularly concerned to affirm this in opposition to Jaspers and the existentialist tendency to confuse finitude and guilt:

this confusion of guilt and finitude appears to me to be one of the gravest confusions of contemporary 'existentialist' philosophy. (3)

Ricoeur traces this "ontologization" of guilt back to Kierkegaard's "fault at birth"(4) and sees in Jaspers that

guilt tends invincibly to become a misfortune of existing which is absolutely past the possibility of pardon and redemption.  
Is there any deliverance from the tragic when the negativity of guilt is given with man's nature?(5)

Reconciliation takes on the colour of an amor fati: it is the acceptance of existence as it is given with its finitude and guilt. "This gift introduces into the centre of freedom a sense of necessity."

Can the tragic be surpassed when the human condition is guilty in itself and when Transcendence is not in



some way a forgiving, saving, life-giving power, instead of a rather abstract order of absolute being?(6)

Ricoeur accepts it as a merit that existentialism brought the negative experiences of life to the centre of reflection, but he wants to establish a "style of 'Yes'" over against existentialism's "style of 'No'". For Ricoeur joy is primary.(7) The human being is the mediation of the two poles of affirmation and negation, which mixture is human fragility. Sadness, the non-necessity of existence, may force itself upon a human being, but the more original of the two poles is affirmation of the origin and ground of existence, of the goodness of being.

Behind the anguish about the end of history is hidden a desire to contribute to a meaningful history. Deeper than the anguish for the inevitability of guilt is a longing for deliverance. Finally, the ultimate anxiety that everything might be built on an evil foundation is the reverse of a most profound affirmation, that of the goodness of being itself.(8) Man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite.(9) Philosophy for us is a mediation of the yes and not a surly intensification of the no.(10)

### Fallibility

Ricoeur begins his work Philosophy of the Will with will as an anthropological and existential theme, but with ontological importance as well, as Van Leeuwen argues.(11) To get from an eidetic analysis of the main functions of the will (Freedom and Nature) to ontological analysis (The Poetics) what Ricoeur calls an "empirics" of the guilty will is necessary. In the reality of existence the pure structures of the will are always

disfigured, and so Ricoeur has to deal with the question of finitude and guilt. Van Leeuwen describes this empirical analysis as "a concrete approach, via negativity, to ontology."(12)

The experiences of guilt and captivity are indissolubly bound to imaginations of innocence. They point beyond fault to a creative life-giving Transcendence. The integral experience of the fault and its mythical counterpart, the vision of innocence, are closely linked with an affirmation of Transcendence.(13)

Because "In fact there is no direct, nonsymbolic language of evil undergone, suffered or committed", (14) a symbolics of evil is necessary.

Ricoeur begins the study with Fallible Man. He is concerned with fault as something of a "foreign body" in humanity, not as a feature of fundamental ontology. It is only conceivable as an accident, an interruption. "The fault is absurd", it has no principle of intelligibility and there can therefore be no eidetic description of it, only an empirical.(15) He is therefore concerned with fallibility, before fault: faced with the fact of fallenness he is concerned to see, empirically, what made fault possible. This is where Tillich would bring in his exposition of essence and existence, and the temptation of self-actualisation. However Ricoeur specifically chooses the centre of perspective of an "ethical vision" of the world. He talks more about this choice of perspective in The Symbolism of Evil (see below). This means

that his effort is continually to understand freedom and evil by each other. It is not a decision about the root origin of evil but about a description of the place where it appears.

Choice of this centre of perspective is already a declaration of a freedom which admits its responsibility, avows to look on evil as committed and avows its responsibility to see it isn't committed. This avowal links evil to man as author not just manifestation. This act of taking-upon-oneself creates the problem. It is a starting point not a conclusion. It places the problem of evil in the sphere of freedom.(16)

Fallibility and fault are obviously not synonymous for Ricoeur. His working hypothesis is that fallibility is to do with a certain non-coincidence of human beings with themselves, a disproportion of self to self.

It is not surprising if evil enters the world with man as he is the only reality which presents this unstable ontological constitution of being greater and lesser than himself.(17)

The feeling of disproportion of self to self is the interior reflection of the human being's mediation between being and nothingness, the infinite and the finite, and thus attests to the original fragility of human reality. Fallibility is thus revelatory of the problem of philosophical anthropology - this paradoxical structure of human being, "suspended between a pole of infinitude and a pole of finitude."(18)

The first pre-philosophical stage of the precomprehension of fallible humanity is the "Pathétique of Misery" found in Plato, with human beings as hybrids, the offspring of finitude and infinitude, a mixture of Meaning and Appearance, and in

Pascal:

For, after all, what is man in nature? A nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an all in comparison with nothing, a mean between nothing and all.(19)

The second philosophical or transcendental stage of comprehension is approached via the faculty of knowing, as the most objective approach, and as a model of the mediation between finite and infinite, perceiving and naming.

This ability to express sense is a continual transcendence, at least in intention, of the perspectival aspect of the perceived here and now... Language transmits the intention, not the perception of what is seen. The word becomes a sign... in the sign dwells the transcendence of the logos of man.(20)

From here Ricoeur goes on to look at feeling, the philosophy of which is concerned with the gap between the purely transcendent exegesis of disproportion, and the lived experience of misery. Feeling is a manifestation of a relation to the world which is "accessible only to... a feeling which is reason but not knowledge."(21) The "universal function of feeling is to bring together" - the human being and things, being and being.

By interiorising all the connections of self to world, it gives rise to a new cleavage - that of self from self. It makes perceptible the duality of reason and sensibility, organic and spiritual.(22)

The duality of feeling is between epithumia - sensible desire for pleasure, stemming from vitality - and eros - the specific desire of reason for happiness. The areas in which the human being seeks to give concrete form to life are having, power and worth, and there is tension here also between the primordial innocence of these quests and the corrupted passions connected with them. These are the "disproportions" in human feeling.

Feeling is caught between the "indefinitude of the thumos", which is itself positive, because human beings are given impetus by the quests for concrete being, but it also brings on the menace of the evil infinitude of desire, of insatiability. These tensions are the fragility of the restless heart. This mixture in humanity, the mediation between original affirmation and existential negation, is fallibility.

As it is never secured, the 'yes', the power to exist, man's effort is always vulnerable... Man remains a 'desir d'être', longing for a ground of being in a lack of being. This situation of finitude and fragility, sets man a double task: he has to understand himself more concretely, to interpret his existence as a conflict of strivings, of limitations and possibilities, or desire and effort; and he has to search for signs which affirm his confidence in the sense of being and give a basis to his original affirmation. It is to this double task that Ricoeur seeks to give an orientation in his hermeneutical theory.(23)

This sounds not unlike Tillich's exposition of essence and existence. The crucial difference for the doctrine of sin is Ricoeur's insistence that fallibility is not fault. Between the possibility and the reality of fault there is a leap, as between an anthropological description of fallibility and an ethic.(24)

It is this transition from innocence to fault, discovered in the very positing of evil, which gives the concept of fallibility all its equivocal profundity. Fragility is not merely the 'locus' the point of insertion of evil, nor even the 'origin' starting from which man falls; it is the 'capacity' for evil. To say that man is fallible is to say that the limitation peculiar to a being who does not coincide with himself is the primordial weakness from which evil arises. And yet evil arises from this weakness only because it is posited.(25)

Freedom for Ricoeur involves choice: "If man ceased being this power to decide, to act and to consent, he would cease to be a

man, he would be an animal or a stone - the fault would no longer be a fault."(26) The hiatus of method between the phenomenology of fallibility and the symbolics of evil gives an expression to the hiatus between fallibility and fault in humanity itself, which hiatus is human freedom.

### Fault

With the symbolics of evil we come then to a consideration of fault as opposed to fallibility, and the question of language. Fault is not accessible to empirical description because of its irrationality. It has an "elementary opacity" obstructing access to intelligibility. It can however be accepted as such:

...if theology opens our eyes to an obscure segment of human reality, no methodological a priori should prevent the philosopher from having his eyes opened and henceforth reading man, his history and civilization, under the sign of the fall.(27)

A "concrete mythics" is necessary to deal with the "coded language" which speaks of the passions which affect the will. The "myths" of fall, exile, chaos etc., must be seen as secondary elaborations of the more fundamental "language of avowal" which is itself symbolic (i.e. the "primary symbols" of stain, sin, guilt) and so requires a hermeneutic. Ricoeur's symbolics is structured around a schema of primary symbols - sin, stain and guilt - which are expressive of the experience of fault; secondary symbols, the narrative development of symbols into myth; and tertiary symbols, gnosis, speculation - the formulation of "doctrine", e.g. original sin. His method is that of the history of religions, and he is concerned with the

development of this complex symbolism, its context in the Jewish people and its relationship to contemporary symbolism and myths. His point of departure is therefore language not being but his view of hermeneutics is "ontological". With Heidegger, Ricoeur believes that human being is hermeneutic. "He is the being who lives while giving meanings to his world: the world is the horizon of his interpretations." Van Leeuwen notes that Ricoeur also goes beyond Heidegger in renewing the epistemological question of hermeneutics:

Thus Ricoeur is a representative of a fourth type of hermeneutics trying, on the one hand, to hold on to the indispensable existential and ontological role of hermeneutics and, on the other hand, to the need for a hermeneutical method which can stand up to the standard of science.(28)

Ricoeur says the task of this hermeneutics is

to show that existence arrives at expression, at meaning and reflection only through the continual exegesis of all the significations that come to light in the world of culture. Existence becomes a self - human and adult - only by appropriating this meaning.(29)

Understanding is thus a mode of being which exists through understanding. So hermeneutics is "grafted" onto phenomenology.

Ricoeur defines the essence of symbol near the beginning of The Symbolism of Evil under six points(30):

1. Symbols are signs - expressions of speech communicating a meaning.
2. Symbol conceals a double intentionality - narrower than sign having opacity, a second analogical meaning beyond the literal.

3. The analogical bond is unobjectifiable - the symbol is donative, the primary meaning makes us participate in the second.

4. Symbols precede hermeneutics - evoking meaning in the opacity of enigma, unlike allegory which is already hermeneutic.

5. Symbolic language is bound essentially to its context, the analogy is part of the meaning - unlike symbolic logic.

6. The analogical meaning is spontaneously formed and immediately significant, unlike myth, a development of symbol in the form of narrative, and articulated in a time and space of its own. So, for Ricoeur symbols are to be taken in their original context, demythologised - that is, no longer seen as explanations - and reinstated as symbols, so that as such they will give rise to thought.(31) They do this through their symbolic or metaphoric function. Central here is Ricoeur's understanding of language as polysemic: words are accumulative, they acquire a differentiated meaning from their previous use and will acquire more meaning from future use. Language is "structure and process, system and innovation."(32) This means that the word is a tensive entity "governed by a system that wants to restrict it to a limited range of possible meanings, and it is involved in a process of innovation and transgression of its possibilities."(33)

Symbol is related to metaphor in various ways:

a. it hides an indirect, figurative meaning behind an indirect



literal one.

b. it exists only in an interplay of meanings (metaphor consists in the tension between an absurd and a metaphorical meaning).

c. its secondary meaning is brought to light through interpretation.

d. it is untranslatable because its surplus of meaning functions through the dynamics between its meanings.

e. it associates different levels of meaning - metaphor does this through metaphorical resemblance, which is indissoluble from the initial incompatibility between things. The symbol assimilates different things.

Van Leeuwen notes that this understanding of symbols through metaphor guards against the tendency to forget that symbols do not offer a direct participation in the symbolized: they call for interpretation, and by giving a broad definition of the symbol as a structure of first and second meaning Ricoeur holds symbols open to more possible interpretations: Symbolism is a

relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning.(34)

However, whereas metaphor is a free invention of discourse, symbolism is a "bound" sort of language. Ricoeur expounds this boundness in terms of the symbol's poetic, cosmic and oneiric dimensions which Van Leeuwen sums up as follows:

So it seems that the whole hermeneutical theory reviewed up to now is summarized in the dialectic of the archeological and the teleological directions of interpretation. In certain symbols human discourse is bound by unknown emotional drives so that it is

'transcended from below' (CI 330: f.326). But by its 'spiritual' and 'poetic' functions discourse is liberated from this bond to the archaism and becomes the instrument for discovering novel meaning.(35)

This dialectic of the archeological and teleological is Ricoeur's concern in The Conflict of Interpretations. He pursues the "necessary" opposition between phenomenology of religion and the psychoanalytical interpretation of religion, the opposition between the Spirit and the unconscious, the order of the ultimate and the order of the primordial.(36) Both, he says, are legitimate in their own context.

The exact same symbols are endowed with these two dimensions and offer themselves to these two opposing interpretations.

The final perspective for the endless interplay is the "eschatological dimension". The ego is decentred in the subjection of human beings to their arche or infancy, and in their evolution towards a telos which the works of culture open up.(37) A third decentering is the eschatological: humanity receives symbols of a meaningful ground under the arche and a meaningful horizon of the teleological project. Symbols

manifest the dependence of the self as an absolute source of existence and meanings, on an eschaton, an ultimate end towards which all the figures of the spirit point.(38)

So we come back to Ricoeur's conviction of a surplus of meaning in this assertion that the power of language to open up the world to reveal deep structures of reality, is ultimately founded on the power of being to reveal itself to humanity. This is why Ricoeur sees the symbolism of evil as worth studying, because it will open up reality. His language here

sounds very like Tillich. Again Van Leeuwen sums up:

In symbols of the sacred man experiences his belonging to a dimension of meaning which is 'the horizon of (his) archeology and the horizon of (his) teleology'..., the horizon of meaning in which life was, is and will be. But, as a horizon, it remains at a distance, beyond human grasp. It is the horizon which 'gives' meaning and which 'invites' ever new explorations and creations of meaning.(39)

### The Symbolism of Evil.

Ricoeur calls the experience of evil "the birthplace of hermeneutics".(40) Evil is a "contradiction" that has always required an answer, and it is an observation that "the preferred language of fault appears to be indirect and based on imagery."(41) He begins with the encounter of Jewish and Greek thought as the fundamental intersection that founds our culture.

Since our existence begins with it, this encounter has become necessary, in the sense that it is the presupposition of our undeniable reality. This is why the history of the consciousness of fault in Greece and in Israel will constantly be our central point of reference; it is our 'nearest' origin, in this spiritual economy of distance.(42)

Anyone who wished to escape this contingency of historical encounters and stand apart from the game in the name of a non-situated 'objectivity' would at the most know everything, but would understand nothing.(43)

At the lowest or most primordial level, we must begin with the confession of sins, which

furnish the myth with a substructure of meaning... Through confession the consciousness of fault is brought into the light of speech; through confession man remains speech, even in the experience of his own absurdity, suffering, and anguish.(44)

Ricoeur notes at the start that though speculation is not

autonomous, and myths are secondary, neither is there any immediate consciousness of fault that can do without these elaborations. Experience as an abstract is detached from the totality of meaning for didactic purposes, but it can be expressed only by means of the primary symbolisms and the whole circle of confession, myth and speculation must be understood as an entity.

a. The confession of sins

Ricoeur sees confession as having a threefold character, in line with the experience it brings to light: blindness, equivocalness, scandalousness. The experience expressed is still embedded in emotion, fear and anguish, it is complex, including different layers of guilt, sin and defilement and it moves to language and questioning because it is disconcerting and incomprehensible. This confession of sins is the background for an analysis of the primary symbols of the experience of fault: defilement, sin and guilt. In this analysis Ricoeur is concerned with the development and growth of the symbolism by which each form is superseded by the next, but is also retained and transformed.

The two aspects Ricoeur isolates within defilement are objectively, the idea of impurity, stain, something quasi-material which infects by contact, and subjectively, ethical terror - the human's entry into the ethical world by

fear. This latter has its origin in the intuition of the connection between defilement, vengeance and physical suffering. The physical order is taken up into the ethical in a first sketch of causality.

Ricoeur notes that the dissociation of the ethical world of sin and the physical world of suffering has been

one of the greatest sources of anguish for the human conscience... suffering has had to become absurd and scandalous in order that sin might acquire its strictly spiritual meaning... Henceforward it will be impossible to co-ordinate doing evil and suffering evil in an immediate expression.(45)

These two traits are passed beyond and yet retained in the vocabulary of pure and impure, katharos, with its oscillation between ethical and physical, where defilement is related to a defining word and a human environment(46), and in an ethical transformation of fear which, expressed in words, is no longer simply a cry but becomes an avowal, in demand for justice, expectation of restoration of order and worth, and hope for the disappearance of fear.

Sin is the second symbol.(47) The dominant factor here is the covenant. That is, sin presupposes a theistic perspective, whether monotheistic or polytheistic, and the God or gods are anthropomorphic, not "Wholly Other". Sin is a religious dimension before it is ethical, violation of a personal bond not transgression of an abstract rule. Its context is the

reciprocity of vocation and invocation - the Word again is involved. Ricoeur looks at the objective and subjective poles. The objective is to do with the Word, with the prophetic and ethical moment of prophecy: it is "the revelation in an infinite measure of the command that God addresses to man"(48), which applies itself to and is in tension with the finite commandment. This tension Ricoeur sees as the basic structure of the covenant:

on the one side, an unconditional but formless demand that finds the root of evil in the 'heart'; on the other, a finite law that determines, makes explicit, and breaks up sinfulness into innumerable 'transgressions', subjects for a future casuistry. If this dialectic is broken, the God of the infinite demand withdraws into the distance and the absence of the Wholly Other; or the legislator of the commandments becomes indistinguishable from the finite moral consciousness and is confounded with the witness that the Just One bears to himself. In this double manner the paradox of distance and presence which constitutes the 'before God' is abolished at the heart of the consciousness of sin.(49)

The subjective pole is put under the heading of the Wrath of God - a new quality of anguish, interpreted in a historical and communal way, with the Day of Yahweh as its most powerful symbol. So evil is seen as a human responsibility, though not yet personalised. The bond of the covenant is stretched, but not broken. God's Wrath is no longer the vindication of taboos or the resurgence of the primordial chaos, but the Wrath of Holiness. There is a rhythm of distance and presence:

In the moment of invocation the sinner becomes fully the subject of sin, at the same time as the terrible God of destruction becomes the supreme Thou.(50)

With this development of fault from defilement to sin the vocabulary changes. Sin is still the experience of a power,

something positive, as with defilement, but in being rupture of a relation it is negative also. The symbolism of sin as Nothingness is the most opposed to the idea of defilement. Sin is a missing of a target, deviation, rebellion, alienation. Ricoeur notes the connection of these terms with a view of the human being as "nothing", as a breath of air, vanity.(51) However sin is also positive, and so defilement is retained. Sin is the human being's positive position within the covenant, which confers onto sin a general transcendence in relation to the consciousness of guilt. Sin is also personal and communal - confession of sins presupposes a concrete universality, an enigmatic bond of hyperbiological and hyperhistorical unity, lost later with the personal imputation of fault. Sin is thirdly within God's absolute regard. "God, not my consciousness, is the 'for itself' of sin".(52) Self-awareness is the attempt to approximate the absolute view, which is the possible truth of the knowledge of oneself. It preserves the reality of my existence beyond my consciousness of it and the reality of sin beyond the feeling of guilt. Fault and transcendence are closely linked. It is integral to fault that it is experienced as fault before God, i.e. as sin. This is seen also in the paradoxical connection between the myth of innocence and the eschatological myth. Freedom remembers its integrity to the extent to which it expects a complete deliverance. "There is a Genesis only in the light of an Apocalypse. That is enough to understand that we cannot suspend the fault without suspending Transcendence."(53)

Ricoeur outlines the various symbols which express this duality of positive and negative, of passivity and activity. We have already noted his criticism of existentialism for concentrating too much on negativity: he sees the primordial experience and symbolism of sin as expressing both. In line with this, there is a duality between the corresponding pictures of salvation as return, and as buying back.(54)

The third schmemma is that of guilt. As a whole this analysis is concerned with the idea of the guilty human being as a movement of rupture from the ideas of defilement and sin, and secondly as a movement of resumption by which the symbolism of defilement and sin is restored along with that of guilt. Within this there is also analysis at a more detailed level of the splintering of the concept of guilt. Whereas sin is hyper-ethical and ontological, guilt is ethical and subjective - it is the achieved internality of sin. As the demand becomes ethical, the subjective pole of responsibility must be a centre of decision. "There is henceforth an 'I' because there is a 'thou'" to whom the Prophet addresses himself in the name of God. When the "I" is emphasised, conscience becomes the measure of evil and consciousness of fault becomes guilt, and not sin at all. The experience of sin is thus individualised and the idea of degrees of guilt develops.



Ricoeur goes on to look in considerable detail at the splintering of the idea of guilt, which occurs in three ways:

A. movement towards ethico-judicial experience - the working out of guilt in relation to penal imputation, conceptual advancement through legislation, legal contests and judges' sentences.

B. ethico-religious experience, development of scruples, with emphasis on practical living of the law, essentially practical bond between humanity and God, and the development of the idea of guilt as loss of a degree of worth. The extreme of the personalisation of guilt and the polarity of the just and the wicked.

C. psycho-theological - the "impasse of guilt": the curse of the law by which one is accursed without being cursed by anyone, as the law becomes atomized and juridicized. The accused conscience becomes isolated and hopeless.

So with the symbolism of guilt fear and exteriority come into force again. With the experience of freedom a new captivity emerges, of human beings to themselves. Ricoeur describes this as an "inward" transposition of the earlier symbols of captivity and infection, in which their symbolic nature is quite clear as they are used to denote a dimension of freedom.

The point we have reached through this analysis of symbols is that of the "Servile Will". This is the central point to the experience and the language of evil. It is because this paradox

is insupportable for thought that guilt must have recourse to a prior symbolism.

The riddle of the slave-will, of a free-will which is bound and always finds itself already bound, is the ultimate theme that the symbol gives to thought.(55)

This is the conclusion of Ricoeur's analysis of the symbolism of evil which we must work from as the "intentional telos of the whole symbolism of evil".

... if theology cannot be thought, if it is, in the proper sense of the term, unavowable, still, what it wants to say - and cannot say - continues to be pointed to in the basic structure of the tragic hero, innocent and guilty.(56)

b. The myths of the beginning.

The next stage is to look at the secondary symbols, the myths of beginning and end, of fall and exile, which are the medium of the primary symbols. Ricoeur is concerned with demythologisation - not demythisation: loss of the element of pseudo-knowledge which treats myths as explanations, in order to recover the myth as myth, to conquer the mythical dimension.

The myth has a way of revealing things that is not reducible to any translation from a language in cipher to a clear language.(57)

This stage is necessary because the myth adds to the revelatory function of the primary symbols. In particular:

the myth makes the experience of fault the centre of a whole, the centre of a world: the world of fault.

The myths of beginning and end embrace humanity as a whole in one ideal history. "Humanity" is manifested as a concrete universal in Adam. This universality gets a concrete character

from the movement of the narration. The narration also accounts for the transition from innocence to guilt in terms of leap and passage between essential being and historical existence, and thus has an ontological bearing. Narration is what adds a new stage of meaning to that of the primary symbols. The myth, as narration, puts the present experience of fault into relation with the totality of meaning. This is another reason for Ricoeur's concern with myth, because of his own conviction of meaning.

Ricoeur looks at four types of myth about the origin and end of evil, the theogonic, the Adamic, the tragic and the orphic. The Adamic is the one he spends most time on, as he ascribes pre-eminence to it.<sup>(58)</sup> The tragic is the myth he sees as closest to the Adamic. This is the myth where fault is indistinguishable from existence, the divine and the diabolical are not distinguished. Initiative in fault is traced to the divine, although Ricoeur notes that a tragic theology, as such, is not explicitly formulated, because this would mean self-destruction for religious consciousness: God's holiness or innocence is always formulated elsewhere. Salvation is within the tragic, not from it, and when the tragic vision is true to itself, he claims, the only consistent deliverance is tragic pity. Ricoeur sees this as close to the Adamic myth because the latter, despite its affirmation of the holiness of God and the sin of humanity, has tragic elements in the implication of

radical, anterior evil, the avowal of evil as non-historical in the figure of the serpent. This is also seen in the future of Job, which penetrates beyond the ethical vision, with the irreducibility of the evil of scandal (i.e. the suffering of the innocent) to the evil of fault. "Thereupon there begins the foolish business of trying to justify God: theodicy is born." (59) The contradiction between Adam and Job is transcended, Ricoeur claims, by the third figure of the suffering servant, where sin and suffering are bonded at a different level than retribution. We will come back to this role of suffering again.

The myth of chaos, the theogonic myth, is close to the tragic in its modern forms. It is the myth which interprets the passivity and seduction of evil in terms of the resurgence of primordial chaos. The Babylonian creation myth falls into this category. There is no place for the fall here because the problem of evil is already resolved in the primordial conflict. There is no history of salvation as distinct from creation. Because the tragic is invincible at the level of humanity and unthinkable at the level of God, the learned theogony assigns the tragic to the origin of things, making it coincide with a logic of being by means of negativity. "The wicked God of tragedy becomes a logical moment in the dialectics of being." Ricoeur admits that his philosophical anthropology does not have the power to posit or refute this thought that evil is a

category of being. But again he points to Christology as the way forward in dealing with the problem, Christology in which suffering in the divinity is a moment which both completes and suppresses tragedy. The choice between consolidation of the tragic in a logic of being, or its inversion in a Christology depends on the Poetics of Freedom, which is to be the third part of Ricoeur's Philosophy of the Will.

The orphic myth, or myth of the exiled soul, Ricoeur sees as the furthest from the Adamic myth typologically, though historically very influential in contaminating it. The orphic myth is isolated in its separation of body and soul, as it develops the apparent externality of seduction and tries to make it coincide with "body". Ricoeur notes the emphases and stages in the Hebrew-Christian symbolism of evil which anticipated the transition to orphic symbolism: the themes of banishment and defilement. A new stage in the process was represented by N.P.Williams' "twice-born" experience: the experience of Paul, Augustine and Luther which Ricoeur identifies as "as anti-voluntaristic as possible", although in Paul the Adamic emphasis on the individual counts against the drift to gnosis. With Adamic speculation, which removed Adam increasingly from being a symbol of the humanity of the human being, and with ascetic and mystic forms of Christianity, Christian tradition adopted the opposition between contemplation and concupiscence, soul and body.

The crucial distinction between these three myths and the Adamic is that the Adamic myth is "the anthropological myth par excellence". It "presupposes the Jewish experience of sin and guilt and marks its maturity." It also gives the human being real responsibility and insists on the freedom which Ricoeur sees as fundamental.

To try to understand evil by freedom is a grave decision. It is the decision to enter into the problem of evil by the strait gate of human reality... (it) expresses the choice of a centre of perspective... to understand evil by freedom is itself an understanding of freedom.(60)

Ricoeur stresses that the myth receives from the experience which precedes it and its symbols, not vice versa. He notes that Adam is not an important figure in Scripture, and was consolidated in retroaction from Christology. However it is an important contribution in working out the positive motifs of this strictly anthropological myth of evil, whilst destroying the basis of all the other myths, with its ethical monotheism.

In terms of the Jewish experience, the spirit of repentance gives itself, in Adam, the symbol of universality. The myth also extends to all humanity the great tension between condemnation and mercy which the prophets taught, and it prepares for speculation in exploring the point of rupture between the ontological and the historical. The origin of the goodness of humanity and of evil in history are strictly divided.

Throughout his analysis Ricoeur relates what he says about sin to the corresponding views of salvation, and in particular the types of the myths of the beginning. In the theogonic or chaos myth salvation is an original dimension, like evil, the problem of which is resolved from the beginning as part of the creative act. "In this 'type' there is no problem of salvation distinct from the problem of creation." (61) To this Ricoeur ascribes the importance of cultural-ritual reenactment as a bond between every historical conflict or drama and the drama of creation. In the tragic myth, any deliverance other than "sympathy" is excluded: tragic "pity", "an impotent emotion of participation in the misfortunes of the hero, a sort of weeping with him, and purifying the tears by the beauty of the song."

In truth, salvation in the tragic vision, is not outside the tragic but within it. 'Suffering for the sake of understanding' - that is tragic wisdom, that is 'tragic knowledge', to speak like Karl Jaspers. (62)

The orphic myth of exile is the principle and promise of "knowledge", "gnosis" and purification by that knowledge.

The idea of happiness - eudaimonein - is at the point where the magical vision and the philosophical vision meet; for "happiness" is the "good soul", and the "good soul" comes to a man when he "knows", when knowledge is the "strongest" and desire the weakest. (63)

For the Adamic myth, however, salvation is necessary and possible and is centred in the person of Christ, the second Adam.

As the ritual-cultural vision of life was coherent with the creation-drama, as the spectacle of Terror and Pity went with the wicked God of tragedy, and as the odyssey of the soul is the answer to the wretchedness of bodily existence, so it can be shown that the eschatological representations of the Man to

come are homogeneous with the fall of the first Man.(64)

Pardon is seen as an interpersonal relation, based on the reciprocity of a gift, and on voluntary substitutive suffering, and this leads to a new creation, in the midst of human being not the separation of soul from body. It is the succession of figures of the Son of Man, judge, king and suffering servant which leads to an understanding of "the one who insures the ultimate symmetry between the Adamic figure of the myth of origin and the series of eschatological figures - namely the figure of the 'Second Adam'".(65) There is, however, progression, not just similitude in comparison between first and second Adam. So the pessimism of the fall abounds in order that the optimism of salvation may abound.

Ricoeur looks at the structure of the myth in terms of the instant of the fall, and the drama of temptation. As an event, an instant, the fall is a caesura ending the time of innocence and the beginning of the time of malediction. Innocence, inserted in the creation story, is posited as a before, sin is attested not to be our original reality, but to be contingent. As a drama representing a lapse of time and several characters, the myth is concerned with temptation. Through the serpent, the commandment - the ethical limit - is alienated, and the meaning of finiteness is obscured so that the evil infinity of desire seems to constitute the reality of humanity. The woman represents the point of least resistance of finite freedom to



the appeal of the evil infinite. With the serpent we come back again to the servile will: he represents the tradition of evil as already there, and of evil's radical externality in the cosmic structure. Humankind is not absolutely evil, to sin is also to yield.

Adam is for all men the prior man and not only the exemplary man; he is the very priority of evil as regards every man; and he has himself his other, his prior, in the figure of the serpent, already there and already sly...

We must express, also, "evil as tradition, as historical concatenation, as the reign of the already there." (66) Ricoeur goes on to look at the symbols of the end which are homogeneous with the symbols of the beginning in Adam. (67)

After outlining the characteristics of the four myths Ricoeur concludes that the best place to listen to, hear and understand what all the myths teach is the place where the pre-eminence of one of those myths is proclaimed still today - the Adamic myth. (68) In theological terms, the doctrine of sin and the symbolisation of its origin belong to faith only secondarily, and derivatively, as part of the prolegomena of faith, as the best counterpart to the gospel of deliverance. The bond uniting the Adamic myth to the "Christological" nucleus of faith is the bond of suitability. The symbolic description of human being in the doctrine of sin suits the announcement of salvation in the doctrine of justification and regeneration. In philosophical terms, the doctrine is revealed in so far as it is

revealing, in so far as it challenges. So the philosopher must wager his belief and win or lose by putting to the test of self-understanding the revealing power of the symbol. Finally, Ricoeur's concern in The Symbolism of Evil is with the appropriation of the other myths, which is part of the pre-eminence of the Adamic, so that the whole cycle of myths is recapitulated. He sums up this recapitulation:

The myth of the fall needs those other myths, so that the ethical God it presupposes may continue to be a Deus Absconditus and so that the guilty man it denounces may also appear as the victim of a mystery of iniquity which makes him deserving of Pity as well as of Wrath.(69)

The last chapter of The Symbolism of Evil points towards the Poetics which will conclude Ricoeur's Philosophy of the Will: the order towards which humanity reaches by their poetic explorations of life's truth and destination. "The symbol gives rise to thought." This is the basic value of the symbolics for Ricoeur. Through a "creative interpretation of meaning" Ricoeur wants to move forward to pure reflection, enriched with what we gain from our symbolic knowledge of evil, a "revivification of philosophy".(70) Van Leeuwen notes Ricoeur's distinction between the tasks of philosophy and theology, in the polarity between theology's "'pathos' of authority" and philosophy's "'pathos' of freedom as defiance." He notes that in de-absolutising philosophy however, Ricoeur has also surely prepared the way for dialogue between de-absolutised philosophy and de-absolutised theology.

Should not theology, too, be aware of its interpretive character, i.e. the fact that it remains at a distance from the full meaning of the biblical

message?(71)

The role of the symbol in general hermeneutic terms, in the question of the point of departure for theology, is an area of debate which is not my direct concern here. However what Ricoeur says must have relevance for a more specific theological concern for the doctrine of sin. He applies his thought specifically to the doctrine of original sin.

### c. Speculation on sin

This doctrine comes at the level of tertiary symbolism - it is a rationalisation and speculation of the myth of the fall, in which the "concept" becomes quasi-gnostic, involving quasi-juridical knowledge of guilt and quasi-biological knowledge of transmission. Although intended to be anti-gnostic, in Augustine, with the insistence that evil is not being but doing, the concept becomes increasingly (quasi-) gnostic in the connection between evil and nature in Augustine's struggle against the Pelagians. So original sin became a "concept", a rationalisation of the myth of Adam as if it had proper consistency. It is a "false column" to the Jewish-Christian edifice where the Adamic myth itself is a "flying buttress rather than a keystone".(72) However Ricoeur does not despair of original sin altogether. He claims that it is still a rational symbol of what we mean in the confession of sins. By "deconstructing the concept" we can hopefully retrieve the "orthodox" intention, the strict sense, the ecclesiastical meaning of original sin. This meaning comes back to the servile

will. Ricoeur sees the specific intention of the doctrine as referring to the realism of sin as a mode of being, its communal dimension and its power. Obviously the idea of the servile will must be prominent in an application of Ricoeur to the problem of sin on a broader level, which includes what is indicated by original sin, but also goes beyond it.

Ricoeur's conclusion, then, is that the symbol "gives rise to thought", "Beyond the wastelands of critical thought, we seek to be challenged anew."(73)

What we need is an interpretation that respects the original enigma of the symbols, then lets itself be taught by them, but that, beginning from there, promotes the meaning, forms the meaning in the full responsibility of autonomous thought.(74)

Finally then, it is as an index of the situation of man at the heart of the being in which he moves, exists, and wills, that the symbol speaks to us... All the symbols of guilt - deviation, wandering, captivity - all the myths - chaos, blinding, mixture, fall, - speak of the situation of the being of man in the being of the world.(75)

We have begun to see the theological potential of Ricoeur's work in chapters 3 and 4 when we considered the implicit "beginning-mythologies" involved in the thought of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg. We saw the significance of the Genesis narrative - the mythology which, for Ricoeur, is essential to the symbolisation of sin - in its intention to make sin a matter of human history rather than exclusively a matter of ontology or

metaphysics. Ricoeur's analysis of the relationships between the alternative mythologies was borne out by our recognition, in the thought of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg of elements and emphases which belong more properly to the non-Christian mythologies which Ricoeur outlines, and of the destructive and unacceptable results and correlates of these intrusive elements. In these chapters we also saw that the paradox of freedom and necessity is indeed central to the meaning of sin, and that there is an inevitable symmetry between ideas of sin and of salvation such that changes in the one will affect the other.

Ricoeur's ideas have thus been seen already to be of value as a critical tool, but this application could be taken much further than can be attempted here. Ricoeur himself has not yet pursued his theory into practice, but the aptness of his analysis for theological criticism and understanding provides hope that his understanding of the language of sin and evil as symbolic, and his explanation of the rise and context of these symbols, relating them to their originating experience, assessing their relationship of opposition and inter-dependence with alternative mythologies and recognition of and regard for the symmetry between the symbols of the beginning and the end may make a positive and fruitful contribution to a contemporary Christian understanding of sin.

Norman Perrin makes use of Ricoeur's work (and that of Wheelwright) applying an understanding of symbol to the idea of the Kingdom of God.(76) He distinguishes his argument from Ricoeur's in that he sees the symbol of the kingdom of God as evoking the myth of God who created the world, and who is active on behalf of his people in the world. He sees the symbol as functioning by its evocative power and being effective on this ground. His definition of myth, quoting Alan Watts, is "a complex of stories... which for various reasons human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life."(77) The myth derives its power, in turn, from its ability to make sense of the life of the Jewish people.(78) Kingdom of God is thus a symbol of cultural range rather than a primordial symbol, such as sin, in that kingdom of God arises from historical experience and from myth. However, Ricoeur does maintain that the myth adds to the meaning of the symbol, that confession, primordial and historical experience must be taken together, and he is also concerned with the historical experience of the Jewish people of God's commandments, judgments and mercy. We have seen the interdependence of the symbol and the myth within systematic theology. The chief difference between Perrin's application and my own is in the cultural specificity of the kingdom of God, which has not the universality of the experience of sin.

Perrin refers to both Ricoeur and Wheelwright in calling the kingdom of God a "tensive symbol" as opposed to a "steno-symbol", a sign or concept. This is equivalent to Ricoeur's distinction between a sign and a symbol(79), and that of D.Cox who sees the distinction as being the fact that symbols provide a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious and thus participate in the reality communicated as the top of the iceberg, the first step of the influence of the unconscious on the conscious, through images.(80) The symbol becomes a concept if it

constantly represents or evokes one idea, by one to one correspondence, so that it is used as a verbal shorthand. He quotes Wheelwright,

A symbol, in general, is a relatively stable and repeatable element of perceptual experience, standing for some larger meaning or set of meanings which cannot be given, or not fully given, in perceptual experience.(81)

As for Perrin, for the kingdom of God, so I would argue for sin:

Other possibilities arise if kingdom of God is seen as a tensive symbol, in the message of Jesus, and if the myth it evokes is seen as true myth, i.e., as a narrative means of demonstrating 'the inner meaning of the universe and of human life', or as a means of verbalizing one's basic understanding of the historicity of human existence in the world in language meant to be taken seriously but not necessarily literally.(82)

In the concluding chapter we will draw together the different aspects and problems which have emerged as

# CHAPTER FIVE FOOTNOTES

1. J.W. Van den Hengel, The Home of Meaning, p.53ff, 115ff.
2. T.M.Van Leeuwen, The Surplus of Meaning, p.1ff.
3. quoted Van Leeuwen, p.29f.
4. Freedom and Nature, (FN) p.26.n.
5. "'Black Existentialism' is perhaps only a disappointed idealism and the suffering of a consciousness which thought itself divine and which becomes aware of itself as fallen." FN, p.466.
6. Van Leeuwen, p.29f.
7. Van Leeuwen, p.64.
8. *ibid*, p.16.
9. Fallible Man (FM), p.216. Cf. FN p.480: "... admiration is possible because the world is an analogy of Transcendence. Hope is necessary because the world is quite other than Transcendence. Admiration sings of the day, reaches the visible miracle, hope transcends in the night... Hope says: the world is not the final home of freedom; I consent as much as possible, but I hope to be delivered of the terrible and at the end of time to enjoy a new body and a new nature granted to freedom."
10. FN p.446.
11. FM p.21.
12. *ibid*, p.22.
13. *ibid*, p.23.
14. The Conflict of Interpretations (CI) p.289.
15. Cf. Ricoeur's introduction in FN, p.22ff.
16. FM p.14.
17. *ibid*. p.17f.
18. "The Antimony of Reality and the Problem of Philosophical Anthropology", in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, An Anthology, p.21.



19. FM p.20.
20. FM p.42.
21. Van Leeuwen, p.67.
22. FM p.201.
23. Van Leeuwen, p.67.
24. FM p.217. Ethics presupposes humanity as having missed the synthesis of the object of humanity itself, and its own synthesis of finitude and infinitude.
25. FM p.224.
26. FN p.26.
27. FN p.25.
28. Van Leeuwen, p.69.
29. CI p.22.
30. CI p.14.
31. Van Leeuwen notes that Ricoeur rejects the romantic psychologising prejudice which is concerned only with the life behind the text - the author's intentions. What is important is the life in front of the text; interpretation is a new event of confrontation with what the text says. However the "world" which the text opens is not only centred on "my" subjectivity, "my" personal authenticity. The text should interrupt my prejudiced reading and open up broader dimensions. Interpretation should be a dialectic of explanation and understanding. Van Leeuwen describes this as a hermeneutic arch rather than a circle. One pillar is the discourse of the text, its projecting of a world elucidated by explanation, the other is that of the act of understanding (p.90). The "appropriation" of the text is not just a taking hold of the text by the reader, but the text and its projection of a world take hold of the reader as well.
32. *ibid.* p.93.
33. *ibid.*
34. *ibid.* p.111.
35. p.131.
36. CI p.317ff.

37. For this cf. Van Leeuwen, p.132.
38. CI p.333. Cf. Van Leeuwen, p.132.
39. p.133.
40. Quoted Van Leeuwen, p.134.
41. The Symbolism of Evil (SE) p.9ff.
42. ibid. p.20.
43. ibid. p.24 cf. p.15 n.18.
44. ibid. p.6 & 7.
45. ibid. p.32.
46. p.40f: Thus it is always in the sight of other people who excite the feeling of shame and under the influence of the world which says what is pure and impure that a stain is defilement.
47. Ricoeur notes that the transition is phenomenological rather than historical (p.47) and briefly indicates some of the overlaps and transitions in various cultures.
48. p.55.
49. SE p.62.
50. p.69.
51. Ricoeur notes the corresponding description of salvation as "return" or "pardon".
52. p.84.
53. FN p.29.
54. He spends some time here looking at the idea of expiation and the symbolism of blood. p.96ff.
55. FM xx.
56. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur p.43.
57. SE p.163.
58. cf. p.25.
59. p.313.

60. FM xxiv-xxv.
61. SE p.191.
62. SE p.227,229.
63. SE p.304.
64. SE p.264.
65. ibid. p.271.
66. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols", p.51,52.
67. p.250ff.
68. p.306ff.
69. p.346.
70. p.353.
71. Van Leeuwen, p.163.
72. p.239.
73. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols", p.37.
74. SE p.350.
75. SE p.356.
76. J.H.Morgan outlines the contributions of Cassirer, Ricoeur and Wheelwright and analyses the differences between Ricoeur and Wheelwright as being the relationship between understanding and interpretation. Ricoeur sees the understanding of symbols "within the symbolic mode", understanding symbols by symbols, as the intermediate stage, for modern human beings seek to understand from the more objective point of view of those looking on, seeking to interpret. By this creative interpretation he believes that one can attain or at least strive for truth. Wheelwright, however, believes the question of truth or falsehood is invalid, or irrelevant to the study of symbols. Ricoeur's intermediate stage is Wheelwright's fundamental objective, i.e., "a search for the meaning and experience of 'What Is' as revealed in myth and symbol, for the experiential participant." "Wheelwright would have the student of religious myth and symbol seek to simply grasp the experiential dynamic whereas Ricoeur would press for some kind of conclusion to the data in terms of truth or falsehood", p.76ff, "Religious Myth and Symbol". Perrin tends towards Ricoeur's point of view, although he uses both Ricoeur and Wheelwright.

77. Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p.23.
78. "The Interpretation of a Biblical Symbol:", p.355.
79. The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p.29 and 197ff.
80. in Myth and Symbol.
81. Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p.29.
82. *ibid*, p.198, quoting Bultmann.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

As we consider conclusions arising from the preceding study we should recall the aims outlined in the introductory chapter. These consisted of

- 1) an exploration of the doctrine of sin, its "shape", the way it "works", the questions and answers it is seen to raise and provide and its relationships to other doctrines;
- 2) an experiment in the critical use of Ricoeur's analysis of the symbolism of evil, particularly of the myths of the beginning;
- 3) a pursuit - by way of experimental hypothesis(1) - of my argument that sin is apt to be defined in too narrow and limited a way, thereby losing its essential meaning, that this limitation goes with distorted systematic relationships with other doctrines - particularly the doctrine of salvation - and that such limiting definitions of sin can be helpfully understood as a misappropriation of the idea of sin which fails to treat it as the symbol it is, and as involving a specific mythology.

These three aims come together in my concluding remarks and suggestions about sin's nature as a tensive symbol. My conclusion, at the most basic level, is that the picture of sin which has emerged from my analysis - its shape, the way it

"works" - can indeed be understood as a tensive symbol, and that such an understanding would result in a more satisfactory exposition of the meaning of sin. As we consider what is involved in this view of sin we will see how such a notion helps us to understand the way in which the doctrine "works" systematically, that is, the questions it raises and its interrelationships within a systematic theology. As well as including some of Ricoeur's insights about the symbolism of evil and considering their value, in particular his analysis of the mythologies of "the beginning", this identification of sin as a tensive symbol will also help us to understand how and why the doctrine is liable to be defined too narrowly and how such a limited treatment can and should be avoided.

By way of a brief summary - the implications of which will be considered as this chapter proceeds - the designation of sin as a tensive symbol means that sin is an idea or doctrine which collects (and thus to some extent simplifies) and represents a range of meanings and issues. These meanings and issues need to be thus represented or symbolised in order for us to express them and to be able to discuss them. This need for a symbol arises out of the range and complexity of the meanings and issues concerned and out of the inherent paradoxes which are involved in sin. So we need some such symbol as sin for two major reasons. One is the practical reason that we need some kind of short-hand to enable us to talk about sin, because it

includes so many meanings. The second reason is that the human experience of sin is something opaque; it goes beyond human comprehension and cannot be objectified except via particular instances, not only because of this breadth of meaning and of reference, but because it is a paradoxical experience.

Ricoeur outlines the development of the Jewish understanding of sin through its articulation by means of various images such as stain, missing the target, defilement. An essential part of what sin means is anthropological: it is the confession by human beings of their own conflicting experiences of shame, guilt, responsibility and unavoidable fate. This confession of sins is the "substructure of meaning" behind the myth and the symbolism.(2) This is what Vanneste means when he describes our explanation of sin as a "theology - that is, a human way of conceiving and expressing a reality beyond complete explanation. Because we realize the limited character of our knowledge, we can be more cautious in objectivizing our concepts."(3) As we saw in the last chapter, Ricoeur traces the process of the development of ideas about sin through primary, secondary and tertiary symbolism to the point where ultimately a "concept" is developed which rationalises, and thus becomes a "false column" like original sin.(4) Much of what is said about symbol applies to sin:

the vast mass of the most important truths are known to us and communicated to others under the forms of symbols with a penumbra of indefinable suggestion.(5)

This is the kind of use of language with which Ricoeur is concerned, and which I am applying to sin in general. Sin's nature as a symbol has thus to do with human beings' ambiguous experience of themselves, and here lies its spontaneity and opacity, as that experience is immediate and conflicting. Sin's symbolism involves the expression and confession of human experience as well as reflection on and conceptualisation of those feelings - Ricoeur's primary, secondary and tertiary symbolisations. It points to something which lies beyond the human capacity to rationalise, even to articulate. "(Symbols) function in man's communal life by representing larger wholes having special significance and power over men's lives."(6) It is thus not appropriate to try to "define" sin as a rigid concept with a fixed content, although even as a tensive symbol it has limits which we will discuss in due course.

Sin's symbolic function is thus the expression of human experience, which is ultimately incomprehensible, and it is also the collection of a range of meanings (including this experience) which we will consider below. It is a tensive symbol because the range of meanings which is symbolised involves ambiguity and paradox. This means that just as the existential human reality of sin involves tension and paradox so the symbol - the doctrine of sin - involves tension and paradox because it refers to a multitude of meanings between which there is tension. It is not a sign or a "steno-symbol" (7), it does



not have one-to-one correspondence to any single, objectifiable, comprehensible reality but refers to a number of meanings some of which conflict with each other. The symbol is itself also tensive in its very existence as an attempt to express and denote something which is ultimately inexpressible, an experience which goes beyond words. Such an understanding gives the doctrine of sin a flexible and "elastic" quality. It does not have a clear, static content or a clearly defined outline and is thus, as we have seen, prone to be limited in its range of meanings either specifically and deliberately, or by default by the over-determination of some other prior concept or understanding.

The analysis which was undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4 confirms the complex nature of sin as a doctrine which must be seen within a systematic context. In positive terms this means that it can only be understood, properly when seen in relation to the doctrines of God, creation, salvation and humanity. We have seen this exemplified negatively in the thought of Barth. Whereas Barth, when talking about sin as a human phenomenon, is convinced of the reality of sin and astutely describes its forms (particularly as self-deception), the reality of sin seems to be questionable when it is seen in relationship to creation and salvation in Christ. Similarly with Rahner and Pannenberg it is in its relation to salvation and to redeemed humanity that sin's significance is called into question. When talking about sin,

its nature and its effects on human beings and their relationships all three of these theologians have illuminating insights to offer. However when these estimates of sin, which seem to take account of its force and its real effects on human nature, are weighed against the effects on humanity of salvation and election it is these latter determinations which are seen to be predominant in such a way that the actual existence or the radical nature of sin is called into question. The importance of seeing sin in terms of these interrelationships is also highlighted by the fact that my criticisms of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg were focused largely on the implications of their thought for our understanding of humanity, its role and the extent of human freedom.

This assertion - confirmed by the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 - that sin must be seen in terms of these interrelationships is illuminated and confirmed by an understanding of sin as a symbol. That is to say, sin's nature as a symbol - as representing a whole range of meanings - determines the way in which the idea of sin functions within a theology, and thus requires the kind of systematic analysis we have outlined. For sin to function properly within a theology its range of meanings should be understood, and this range of meanings immediately brings the doctrine into relationship with the doctrines of creation, salvation and so on. So sin must not be treated as a single, simple concept which may be defined a

priori, or which may be understood from one particular perspective, for example from the perspective of salvation. An understanding of sin solely based on a prior understanding of salvation (for example, of salvation as that which is already achieved and which determines human nature and existence) may result in a view of sin solely as that which is overcome, so that sin may be seen as having no real effect on human nature and existence. Such a definition would fail to account for human freedom and for the fact that sin persists after the fact and the acceptance of salvation. This further reference of sin to human freedom means that our understanding of salvation should take account of the human will to sin, should incorporate the notions of forgiveness and repentance and should seriously address the question of the possibility of human beings rejecting salvation.

So sin, by its very nature as a symbol, refers to a cluster of meanings and issues which require that the doctrine should be seen in its context in order to be correctly understood.(8)

The range of meanings which are symbolised by sin can be divided into two broad categories. Firstly, there are particular questions, issues and references which are part of the logic of sin. These are the "formal" meanings of sin, i.e. the meanings which relate to sin as an idea, a doctrine, its

symbolic function and the way it "works". These formal meanings particularly demand that sin should be seen in the systematic context indicated above. That is, it should be seen always in relation to other ideas and doctrines, those concerning God, humanity and salvation. Secondly there is a range of "material" meanings which relate more immediately to sin as a concrete, observable human phenomenon. This range of material meanings involves ideas about the forms taken by sin and the way in which it affects human beings as an existential and dynamic reality.

#### A. The formal meanings of sin.

The first set of elements or cluster of meanings which are symbolised by sin include the following (which are clearly interlinked with each other). Firstly, sin has reference to God. As a notion of wrongness or evil sin requires a corresponding notion of rightness or good in order for it - sin - to be recognised as wrong. Within Christian theology this takes the form of reference to God, so that sin may be seen as rebellion against God, transgression of God's law, alienation from God or judgment by God. Sin may alternatively be seen as part of God's purpose, so that the relationship between God and sin may be dealt with through the explanations of supra- or infra-lapsarianism, the fall - and thus sin - being explained in relation to God's will and plan. Similarly the distinction between God's ordination or permission of sin may be brought in here.

Related to this reference of sin to God is its reference to "the beginning", as we have indicated in the designation of supra- and infra-lapsarianism as ways of dealing with the inevitable reference to God. Just as sin inevitably raises the question of the good, of the standard against which it is judged to be sin, so this relationship of sin and God, wrong and right, inevitably raises the question of the origins of sin. The dualistic explanation that good and evil are equal forces which have always existed is unacceptable within the framework of Christian theology because of its ethical monotheism. God, who is good, is the only ultimate and original force, so that reference to God is reference to the good origins of reality. This means that we must either ascribe the authorship of sin to God - and this explanation has generally been condemned with the affirmation that Deus non causa peccatum, and the affirmation of the goodness of God's creation - or we must explain how sin came to be despite the origins of all things in God's creation. So sin, within Christian theology, needs to be related to the beginning, and so the Adamic myth affirms the goodness of this creation and ascribes responsibility for sin to human beings as an act of free human will. However we should note that the origin of sin is not thereby thoroughly accounted for because of the presence of the serpent. The narrative sets the limits that Deus non causa peccati and that human will is a partial explanation for sin, but the question is not solved. We will consider this further when we look at the paradoxical nature of sin.

So the question of the beginning, which is related to - even derived from - the reference of sin to God, has been dealt with by various doctrines of creation and fall such as those Ricoeur outlines. With Ricoeur I assumed, throughout my analysis, that the Christian doctrine of sin involves a specific mythology - the Adamic. This assertion was originally made on the basis of Ricoeur's analysis and his wager that the Adamic, anthropological myth is the best counterpart to the gospel of deliverance and hope, that it is the most revealing, and that it reaffirms what is essential to the other myths. We now have further foundation for this assertion in the conclusions to the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 where we found that it was Brunner's concept of sin, based on an understanding of the Adamic myth, which best preserved the essential paradox of sin, the symmetry between sin and salvation and human freedom in this process. We also saw some of the effects of failing to maintain the limits established by the Adamic myth. These effects included the implication that God is indeed the cause of sin or that sin determines humanity as a fate rather than being an expression and result of human freedom. This experiment in the critical use of Ricoeur's ideas provided interesting and suggestive insights in the analysis of Barth, Brunner, Rahner and Pannenberg, and could also be applied to some of the key figures throughout the history of Christian thought about sin such as Augustine, Calvin and Schleiermacher. The question of "beginning-mythologies" has provided an evaluative criterion confirming the dubious nature of some of these conceptions of

sin and has enabled greater understanding of the problem of the paradox of sin, inasmuch as the correct locating of the paradox - within humanity and within the nature not the reality of sin (that is, sin is a paradoxical reality, but it is real) - depends on the maintenance of the distinction between creation and fall, and creation and salvation. It also thus involves the maintenance of some historical aspect to sin, as part of humanity's progressive history, rather than of human ontology. Only thus is the "anthropological" nature (to use Ricoeur's terminology) of the Christian mythology retained, that is, some degree of human freedom and responsibility for sin, and only thus is the Deus non causa peccati clearly defended. However this is a complex issue because of the reflection, within the Adamic myth, of the paradoxical nature of sin, with the existence of the serpent and of temptation standing over against the ascription of responsibility to human beings. Sin's range of meanings is tensive at this point, because the Adamic myth is not a simple explanation of sin (as we noted above) in terms of human freedom. Although the fall is ascribed to human freedom, the source of sin also goes further back in the presence of the serpent, "already there and already sly". The symbol, sin, in its tensive range of meanings and here in its mythology reflects and expresses the paradoxical human experience of sin as something which we choose to do and for which we are responsible and yet something in which we are already involved and which influences our choice. This is why Ricoeur says that the different myths he considers are interrelated, their

relationship is not one solely of conflict, but there is an element of tragedy in the Adamic myth, with the presence of the serpent.(9)

This means that the critique of Barth, for example, is not a matter of measuring Barth's theology against a check-list of criteria for a correct understanding of sin. If an element of tragedy or fate is perceived in the thought of Rahner or Pannenberg this is not necessarily unacceptable because of the presence of this paradoxical element in the Adamic myth. It is, rather, a matter of balance and of maintaining rather than seeking to resolve the paradox, or allowing it to be resolved by default, by overemphasis on one aspect at the expense of the other. We should struggle to maintain and to understand "both-and", not "either-or". So Barth, although he correctly perceives that sin is something which precedes and enslaves human beings, and is not purely a matter of human choice, and that there is something paradoxical about the very possibility of sin in view of God's nature, emphasises the impossibility of sin at the expense of its reality. Sin becomes, for Barth, that which has been defeated and destroyed and the sense of its present - and paradoxical - reality is lost. Barth's explanation of Nothingness also not only loses the distinction between creation and fall which is necessary, in some form, to preserve the Deus non causa peccatum, but it loses the tension of balance between the fact of sin and the paradox of the



possibility of sin, so that sin becomes defined for Barth in terms of impossibility. The impossibility of sin dominates Barth's understanding, it is not balanced by a similar or equal emphasis on sin's actual reality. The meaning of sin as that which has potent reality and which exists in opposition to God is lost. Sin's full range of meaning is thus not recognised by Barth because of the way in which he deals with this reference of sin to God and to the beginning, and because of his emphasis on the complete and determinative nature of salvation. Something essential to the complex of meanings is lost and so the balance of the whole becomes distorted.

The question of precisely how we should interpret the Adamic myth is not answered in this thesis, although Brunner and Ricoeur's expositions have been found to be helpful, but we have come, through our analysis, to the same conclusion as Perrin that:

The symbol evokes the myth and when the myth becomes questionable or unacceptable, then the use of the symbol changes or the effectiveness of the symbol is lost. The symbol is effective only where the myth is held to be valid.(10)

This conclusion is consonant with the analysis of Kelsey who sees the abandonment of the Adam story, in favour for that of Jesus, as a key feature in the development of theological anthropology in this century, a development where the two categories of the human being as sinner and as knower of God collapse into the one relationship of consciousness of God. In

his incisive analysis Kelsey questions whether theologians have not thus evaded the question of human autonomy and dependence.(11)

The second element which is part of the logic of sin is reference to humanity. As well as representing something which is "wrong" or "evil", which requires the "right" and "good" which refer sin to God, sin is also something relational, it is something which is always "against" or "between" or "away from" and thus requires two reference points which, for Christian theology, are God and humanity. (Sin will, of course, also involve conflict between one human being and another but this is taken to be a part of the conflict between each human being and God).

The reference of sin to humanity also includes the epistemological and existential questions of human experience as the source of the confession of sin and as a criterion in assessing the adequacy of doctrines of sin. Sin is a part of human experience and our understandings and explanations of sin must have a dynamic relationship to human experience. Sin may be operative in all spheres of human existence and behaviour and our understanding of sin should illuminate human experience, as well as being informed by it. These issues are, however, too broad and complex to be dealt with in this thesis although they

are crucial areas which would have to be discussed in any thorough theology of sin.

The reference of sin to humanity is a very immediate and concrete reference because part of sin's meaning relates to human experience, to particular events, actions or attitudes which we identify as wrong, or sinful. This aspect of sin's meaning, in terms of the effects of sin on human nature and human relationships, will be considered in my second category of the material meanings of sin. However there is a more formal relationship between sin and humanity because of the necessity we noted above of two referents, God and humanity. The way in which we interpret this reference of sin will depend on our conception of human being per se, and on our understanding of the relationship between God and humanity; that is, our understanding of what kind of relationship is possible or appropriate between God and humanity. So we see that for Barth the relationship between God and humanity - determined very much by God's nature - does not allow for a rejection or act of rebellion on humanity's part and the conflict of sin takes place between God and Nothingness rather than between God and human beings. This is so because of Barth's explanation of Nothingness which, as we saw in Chapter 3, sees Nothingness as that which is already defeated and because of his emphasis on salvation and election as events which are accomplished for us in Christ and which therefore happen to and not in us. This is

an imbalance in Barth's thought which results not only in an inadequate understanding of sin but in a distortion of the whole "system" of sin's meaning so that Barth's estimate of humanity and his understanding of salvation also suffer.

Similarly with Rahner and Pannenberg we saw that a basic continuity between God and humanity is assumed such that human beings have innate knowledge or ability for understanding of God and of revelation.(12) I criticised this assumption in Chapter 4 not only on the grounds of its inconsistency with the observed realities of ignorance of God and inability to understand Christian revelation, and with the Christian assertion of estrangement and alienation between God and humanity, but also because it upsets the balance of sin's meaning. Sin may, as a result, be restricted in meaning to ignorance, this restriction being accompanied by an inadequate view of humanity and particularly of human freedom and a correspondingly restricted view of salvation. So ideas about sin have reference to our ideas about what it means to be human, and what our relationship is, as human beings, to God, so that one will affect the other.

Sin also has reference to humanity in its reference to the beginning in the question of the origin of sin, as we noted on p.289 above. This is the issue of human freedom. If we accept the limits of the Adamic myth, that is, that human beings are

responsible for sin and yet are tempted by some preceding sinful reality, then we are plunged into the turbulent debate about freedom and determination. If, however, we do not accept these limits the results are less satisfactory than the acceptance of the paradox and the debate. Either human beings can become pawns in an unchristian determination of existence by fate, or God can become responsible for sin or sin becomes entirely a matter of individual, personal free choice. In the latter case the doctrine of sin loses its relationship with sinful human reality where sin is much more than such free, conscious, individual choice, and with Scripture where sin is recognised also to be a power enslaving human beings. The reference of sin to humanity therefore requires, like its reference to God, that we accept paradox as part of the meaning of sin. There are two seemingly irreconcilable facets of sin's meaning both of which must be maintained. Again as we noted in Chapters 3 and 4, the failure to maintain this precarious tension of "both-and" results not only in a deficient view of human nature but also in a limited view of salvation: where sin abounds, grace abounds and vice versa. That is, if our understanding of sin, of that from which we are saved, is limited, then our understanding of salvation itself is likely to be correspondingly limited.

These two references of sin, to God and to humanity, are its basic formal constituents and unify its range of meanings, establishing sin as something which is seen over against God and

which is in some way "between" God and humanity. A third reference of sin which is equally important within Christian theology but which is, in some ways, derivative from the first two, is the reference of sin to salvation. It is derivative in the sense that salvation is one way of dealing with and explaining the relationship between sin and God and between sin and human relationships. It is also, however, part of the logic of sin because sin raises the question of the possibility of salvation, even if this possibility is ultimately rejected. Within Christian theology of course this reference is seen in the role of sin as the presupposition of salvation in Christ. The "problem" of sin as something which "should not be" is in some way dealt with or answered in salvation and our understandings of sin and salvation are mutually dependent. We learn more of one by insight into the other. So the questions are raised of the possibility of salvation, of the form which such salvation would have to take in view of the need (ie. sin), and of the status sin has in view of the Christian affirmation of the accomplishment of salvation in the historical events of Christ's life, death and resurrection. We have seen this relationship in our critiques in Chapters 3 and 4. Firstly, in our application of Ricoeur's ideas to our analysis we saw the correspondance between particular views of creation and fall, and particular understandings of the nature of salvation; for example, in the "tragic" view where finiteness is fallenness, salvation may be little more than a sort of tragic pity, and where sin is identified with ignorance salvation will

be understood in terms of knowledge.(13)

We also saw the relationship between sin and salvation in our conclusions in Chapters 3 and 4 that in the thought of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg (to differing degrees and in different ways) the accomplishment of salvation is emphasised to such an extent that the present reality and force of sin and estrangement between God and humanity are lost.(14) Our conclusion is that sin must indeed be seen in relationship to salvation, but that if salvation is over-emphasised then the reality of sin may be forfeited. I will return to this reference of sin to salvation in the conclusion to this Chapter as I think it is an area of particular significance and potential for our understanding of sin.

With this third reference of sin we have the three elements of the traditional schema of creation, fall and redemption and we noted in Chapters 3 and 4 the implications of the abandonment of this schema in favour of one determined solely by salvation or election in Christ. So with Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg the emphasis is very much on the achievement of salvation, in view of which not only the extant reality of sin but also human freedom is threatened. Once more the balance of the meanings of sin is upset, one reference - that to salvation - is emphasised at the expense of another reference - that to humanity - and the

result is a distortion of the whole.

Following on from the relationship between sin and salvation is developed the reference of sin to eschatology. This is the outworking of the relationship between sin and salvation into the possibility of condemnation and it is an important factor in the paradox which is involved, as in the two sections above, in the reference of sin to salvation. This paradox is present because of the Christian affirmation that with Christ salvation was achieved but that the completion of the schema is still future. It is the tension between salvation as achieved and as not yet complete, the co-existence of salvation and sin. We have criticised various theologies on the grounds of implicit universalism. If all are saved then what ultimate significance does sin have? The question of judgment and universalism is one which has been thrown up but not answered by this thesis, but the development of a theology of sin would have to consider in greater depth the ultimate results of sin.

It has been a critical point when looking particularly at the thought of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg, that their understandings of salvation, subsuming sin, lead to universalism in various degrees. The question of universalism is not itself at issue here - i.e. whether or not universalism is tenable



within a Christian theology; and this question is not discussed at length by any of the above. It is not adequate, without dealing with the question at length, to dismiss a particular conception of sin solely because it implies or leads to universalism. However I think it is fair, from a position within the Christian tradition, to say that universalism is unacceptable when its basis is a depreciation of sin and of human freedom. The importance of both of these has been upheld since the origins of Christianity, and any theory of universalism must take them into account in a way which the implicit universalism we have noted does not. It is certainly a valid criticism of Barth on the grounds of his own rejection of universalism.(15)

These, then, are the formal references of sin, involved in the logic of sin and thus contributing to its range of meanings. It is because these issues are part of sin's meaning that sin must be seen in its theological context and related to other doctrines. This understanding of the range of meanings which are collected up in the symbol sin helps us thus to understand how the doctrine "works" in its theological context. We have explained why the doctrine of sin is inseparable from these wider theological issues and how a failure to maintain the right balance between these various references - even though this means accepting paradox - leads to a distortion of the whole.

## B. The material meanings of sin.

Sin also includes a range of more material meanings. This thesis has concentrated on the formal aspects of the doctrine and its interrelationships rather than on these more specific meanings but the formal and the material have only been separated as an expedient for closer analysis and they should be seen as mutually dependent. What I mean by "material" here is the content of the doctrine in terms of its existential meaning. That is, sin as it occurs and affects us and our relationships and lives as a dynamic reality. Because this thesis has concentrated largely on the formal nature of sin - ie. on sin as an idea or doctrine - this section will indicate this range of material meanings by sketching out the issues and questions involved rather than by making specific suggestions.

This broad range of material meanings can be related to Ricoeur's understanding of the symbolism of evil as a process for Ricoeur in which the symbols develop along with the community's penitential experience, which they express, each stage of this development contributing to the following and to the preceding stages. This development is part of the polysemic nature of words: their meaning is accumulative and progresses and develops with their usage. For sin this links the doctrine closely to human experience, as confession endows the word with different shades of meaning. As a tensive entity - rather than a sign or steno-symbol - the word is:

governed by a system that wants to restrict it to a limited range of possible meanings, and it is involved in a process of innovation and transgression of its possibilities.(16)

The suggestion that sin has a range of such material meanings answers numerous protests against specific limitations of sin's meaning: for example, against its limitation to a moral category or an individual phenomenon.(17) It also corresponds to various analyses of the Biblical material.(18) This range of meanings is open-ended as human experience is open-ended, and should be equally multi-faceted, unless we can justify the exemption of any particular area of human experience from the effects of sin. I suggested in my critique of Rahner and Pannenberg that we cannot assume that human reason will function in a particular way so as to lead human beings to salvation because this is to assume that reason is not affected by sin. This raises the question as to whether sin is self-limiting because our ideas themselves cannot be exempted from the effects of sin and thus might be expected to be inadequate. Similarly with any other area of human nature or experience; the breadth of the meaning of sin should correspond to the breadth of human experience.

So sin's range of meaning includes sin as active and passive, negative - a lack or deficiency - and positive, individual and personal and collective or communal, freely chosen action and innate disposition or state. It includes the dialectic of the unconditional demand and finite law, i.e. sin and sins, the hyper-ethical and ontological aspect often thought

of as sin as well as the ethical and subjective: guilt. Also included in some way in the developing symbol of sin is physical suffering, and Ricoeur notes that when sin is separated from suffering, as strictly spiritual, then suffering becomes absurd and scandalous.(19) It also includes the elements traditionally distinguished as "original sin" and "actual sin". As many writers on original sin have affirmed, the core of the doctrine of original sin, which is essential to the Christian understanding of sin and should thus be retained, is the paradox of the antecedence of evil, the tragic depth of sin which transcends understanding, so that sin is, paradoxically, both that for which we are responsible and that which we "cannot help". To say as Augustine and others said, that original sin is sin "only improperly so-called" is based on the presupposition that sin necessarily involves individual, responsible decision and will and that an inheritance of any kind cannot therefore be sin. I have suggested that sin means more than this and includes this essential paradox of original sin, that we are sinful in some way before we individually sin.

Indeed this paradox is essential to what sin means. With this understanding of sin it becomes unnecessary to distinguish between sin and original sin in the precise way in which they have been distinguished in the past. Both are included in the broad scope of sin's symbolism which includes that for which human beings are responsible and that for which they are not responsible but in which nonetheless they are involved, and for which they suffer. This is the involuntary at the heart of the

voluntary to which "original" sin refers. This also means that so-called "natural evil" can be seen as part of what sin means: part of the fallenness of the created order. It is within the tensive meaning of sin that the paradox lies, in the juxtaposition within human beings of individual guilt and inevitability, not in the antecedence of sin per se. That is, the antecedence of sin is not in itself paradoxical. What is paradoxical is that sin is both antecedent, and a matter of individual human freedom and will.

As with the formal elements, so with the material, the meaning of sin involves paradox. It is a tensive symbol. It would be the job of a systematic theology concerned with sin - the project to which this thesis points - to work out the tensive relationships such as that between sin as an individual choice and personal responsibility and sin as a communal responsibility. For example, is it valid to speak of "national guilt"? How does personal responsibility relate to this? Another tension to be explored is that between sin as personal choice and responsibility and the sin which is already there. Can we work towards a contemporary exposition of the meaning of original sin? There has been some significant work on this problem, relating both of the above issues in reinterpretations of original sin as collective sin, the "sin of the world".(20) Having insisted that we must recognise both aspects - "original sin" as some kind of determination by sin, sin as a power and

temptation, and "actual sin" as our personal actions and attitudes(21) - we should go on to explore the relationship between the two. How do temptation and personal responsibility work together? Is it possible to make any precise distinction between original and actual sin? Although we cannot start this exploration here what is important is that the limit has been established that both aspects must somehow be maintained.

Connected with these questions is the traditional idea of concupiscence. Is there any validity in seeing material, bodily existence as sinful in some way, or as the "occasion" of sin. Is this what Pannenberg is doing in speaking of our "animal" nature as egocentric and thus sinful and as conflicting with our "exocentric" nature which is part of our specifically human nature which is oriented towards God? Also connected with the discussion about original and actual sin is the relationship between sin and guilt. Is guilt always to be based on personal responsibility and decision? This, again, relates back to the possibility of collective guilt.

Sin's range of material meanings corresponds specifically to its formal reference to God in that our understanding of sin will depend on our understanding of God and of our relationship with God, also on our understanding of the nature of salvation. So sin may be described as ignorance, rebellion, finitude,

impossibility, disobedience or alienation depending on whether this relationship is seen in terms of knowledge or being, or as a relationship which is analogous to human relationships between subjects and monarchs or leaders or lawgivers, or between friends or family. In relationship particularly to salvation, sin's meaning includes the question of the sin of believers. Is there a qualitative difference between the sin of believers and that of non-believers? Is apostasy a real possibility? What is the unforgivable sin? How does the possibility of such an unforgivable sin relate to salvation and to the balance between sin and salvation?

As with the formal meanings of sin so with the material meanings concentration on any one aspect to the neglect of others may well upset the balance of the whole. That is, the resulting picture of sin and of sinful humanity may be deficient and this deficiency may extend to the understanding of salvation. The material issues sketched out above also correspond to the formal in their affirmation of paradox, such as that of sin as individually willed and yet prior to human choice. The presence of such paradox is hardly surprising given the complex and paradoxical nature of human experience. Indeed, we should be suspicious of any supposed representation of this experience which does not reflect the paradox which is inherent in it. Such paradoxes are therefore not problems to be solved but provide limits to be explored and such exploration within

limits will result in a more satisfying doctrine of sin than results from the attempt to resolve or deny the paradox.(22) The role of paradox and the possibility of explaining such paradox require further explanation but for the purposes of this thesis, which cannot undertake such explanation, it is important to affirm that the paradox is inherent and unavoidable in the meaning of sin.

The discussion in greater detail of the material content of sin would include the exposition of some of the formal limits established above. One which we have already noted is the exposition of what it means in practice for us to be free and yet in some way determined. Another would be further consideration of the "beginning mythology" which provides limits which we have seen to be necessary to our understanding of sin. I have argued, with Ricoeur, for the necessity of maintaining a fully Christian understanding of the beginning and of maintaining a distinction between creation and fall. However having delineated this boundary in the most basic way we would have to go on to consider, in more detail, just what this means. We would also have to consider the relationship between the various mythologies of the beginning (as outlined by Ricoeur) and their impact on and conflict with the Christian tradition. This project raises particular problems because of the complex relationship between Christian theology, evolutionary theory in all its forms, and the social sciences; but the limits we have



discovered should provide guidelines in this discussion.(23).

I have outlined above the range of meanings, formal and material, which are collected by the symbol "sin". I have suggested why these meanings are essential to our understanding of sin and this has also been demonstrated in the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4. Having said that sin involves all these meanings, can we articulate more clearly the way in which these elements hang together? We have said that these elements are necessary, that they are involved in the logic of sin and in its reference to the originating human experience of sin, and that sin as a symbol collects up all these meanings. It is helpful also to see these meanings working as as a system, a complex of interrelated elements, which are symbolised by sin. A system here is understood as a set of elements standing in interrelation(24) a continuous, boundary-maintaining, variously related assembly of parts (25), so that change in one element may produce changes in the whole, and such that the interaction between the elements may include tension. When we talk of sin as symbolising a system of meanings it should be stressed that "system" here is not a static, rigid, totally rational and self-sufficient construct such as that which Brunner rightly rejects(26): it is not something to be constructed and imposed on the material. It is rather a way of understanding the doctrine, the shape of which should be allowed to emerge through the analysis of theology and of human experience and confession.

The "system" is something to be discovered from the kind of analysis which was undertaken in Chapters 3 and 4. There are four particular elements of such an understanding of system which make it an appropriate model for understanding sin's range of meanings.

1. First, the system consists of elements which are interrelated and there is thus a balance constituted by these interrelationships. The implication of this is that the balance may be upset if one element is left out or given too much weight. Changes in one element may affect the whole in a chain reaction. We saw this effect in the thought of Barth, Rahner and Pannenberg where particular understandings of the relationship between God and humanity were determinative for the whole system of elements represented by sin. I suggested that the resulting systems were unbalanced.

2. Second, the system is "boundary-maintaining". It has limits and may be self-limiting. Some of these limits were very clear in our analysis: Deus non causa peccati, monotheism and the goodness of God, the responsibility of human beings and the anteriority of sin expressed in the Adamic myth. The necessity of balance in the system is also a limit. For example, there is to be symmetry between sin and salvation so that an understanding of sin which corresponds to an unacceptable

understanding of salvation cannot itself be accepted. The Christian affirmation of the achievement of salvation in Christ is also a limit for sin because it means that sin is ultimately conquered. This particular limit can, however, be interpreted in different ways depending on our conception of eschatology, of punishment and the possibility of being lost. A topic for further discussion would be whether or not the boundaries are traversible, as the possibility of being lost might traverse the limit of sin's ultimate destruction by salvation in Christ. Similarly the possibility of an unforgivable sin might destroy the necessary symmetry between sin and salvation. We suggested earlier that sin may be a self-limiting idea because of the necessity of allowing for the effects of sin on our rationality and thus on ideas such as that of sin. The presence of paradox within the system is another limiting factor which we will consider below.

3. Third, the system is open, not closed. This openness includes two elements.

a. Firstly it includes the interchange between its various elements.(27) We have already explored this interchange, and noted that it should result in a balanced whole, this balance in itself constituting a limit for the system. So a particular element within the system should not be understood either as a self-contained unit which will determine other elements but will

not itself be determined by them, or in terms of only one such interrelationship, unless such an understanding can be specifically justified. The whole system of interrelationships must be allowed to inform our understanding of any particular element. So, for example, we suggested that Barth sees sin too exclusively in terms of its being overcome by Christ in election and does not relate it sufficiently to human freedom and the reality of human experience. In exploring this understanding further it would be necessary to ask whether there are elements within the system which are primary in some way, which are determinative for but not determined by other elements - for example, the reference of sin to God. Changes in such an element might then have greater impact on the whole than other changes. That this may be the case is indicated by the status of sin traditionally as the presupposition of salvation, and the common practice of beginning with Christology and salvation and working back to sin as that from which we are saved. This means that the "balance" which we have talked about need not be a static balance between equal parts, but the ideal might involve what might be called an imbalance between more and less weighty elements. So whereas it is important to be able to recognise a system which is unbalanced and which does not give due weight to particular elements, this does not mean that we should aim for some ideal balance of co-equal elements. It is not the balance for its own sake which is important, but correct relationships between the different elements. Identifying those elements or relationships which are primary is another way of drawing up

limits as well as providing guidelines for a more material and existential exposition of sin.

b. The second aspect of the system's openness involves the necessarily dynamic relationship between our existential experience of sin and our expression and conceptualization of sin as an idea. This relates to Bertalanffy's definition of an open system as a system in exchange of matter with its environment, presenting export and import, building-up and breaking-down of its material components.(28) This discussion relates to the epistemological question of the role of human experience, a question which we noted before is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is, however, an area which should not be overlooked.

My critique in Chapters 3 and 4 included the charge that the theological anthropologies in question do not seem to be true to the way humanity is. I made such criticisms of Rahner's "anonymous Christian" thesis and his use of Jaspers' boundary situations, also of Pannenberg's account of the human being's role and use of reason in the process of revelation through historical events. In both cases it is implied, or stated, that gaining knowledge of God is a natural process of recognition because of human "transcendence" and openness. Both Rahner and Pannenberg have worked out complex anthropologies and are concerned with the apologetic application of what they are

saying to human beings' experience of themselves. Obviously their anthropologies cannot be dismissed simply by stating that "humanity isn't like that". A satisfactory critique would include the formulation of an alternative theological anthropology corresponding with the understanding of sin which we are developing. Such an investigation would necessarily entail the examination of the philosophical roots of these anthropologies, which we are likewise unable to carry out here. However there must be a point at which any anthropology is open at least to question on the grounds of its applicability to observed reality, and of its failure to interact with the existentialist tradition with its assertion of the human experience of alienation and lack of meaning, although we cannot dismiss an anthropology on the basis of this accusation alone. This is to take seriously Barth's complaint about Rahner's anthropology for its inadequate relationship to empirical reality. Maybe an understanding of human experience as the "environment" of the system which sin symbolises would be a way of understanding the process whereby human experience and Christian doctrine surely must be related, and must inform each other.

This relationship between human experience and the symbol, sin, means that the symbol must be open-ended because the human experiences which it expresses are open-ended. Human freedom, which is one of the elements of the system, thus means that the

system is, again, self-limiting in that it has an in-built safeguard against becoming fixed or static. This openness corresponds to the open-endedness and contingency of human experience. As Dillistone argues, in his conclusion in Myth and Symbol, true symbols have a flexible, expansive and open-ended nature because of their relation to a reality which is richer and more mysterious than itself(29): in this case the reality of human experience. This openness allows for the possibility of change and development in the doctrine which should thus also be contingent to some extent. The possibility of change in the doctrine and the suggestion of the necessary relationship between the system and its environment are also relevant to the discussion of the relationship between systematic theology as a whole and other systems of thought, such as those in which evolutionary theory is an element. Such elements can have drastic effects on some elements of systematic theology, if not on theology as a whole, and an understanding of the relationships between open systems and between systems and their environments might be a constructive way of understanding this process. Buckley notes that the response of closed systems to the intrusion of external elements is the loss of organization or change in direction of the system, whereas the response of open systems is elaboration or a change of structure to a higher or more complex level.(30) These possibilities raise all sorts of questions which we cannot begin to discuss here, but it is significant to note even the possibility of this kind of openness.

4. The fourth aspect of sin's systematic meaning is that the system involves tension. The relationship between the elements in a system may include interaction or competition. We have noted throughout our analysis and our exposition of sin as a symbol that there are paradoxes which are inherent and essential to sin's meaning. I have focused particularly on the paradox of freedom and determination, on sin as an individual self-determination and yet as also "already there", Ricoeur's "servile will". This paradox is, on Ricoeur's account, at the heart of the Genesis narrative which attributes responsibility for sin to human beings, but which also posits evil as already therein the serpent. There are other tensions: between God's goodness and power and the very possibility of sin existing at all, and between sin as something which was conquered in Christ and which is still extant and powerful. Another tension is that between the assertion of continuity between humanity and God, because human beings are created in God's image and could not be without God and the assertion of discontinuity because sin is "between" God and human beings, involving estrangement, alienation and separation. These paradoxes and tensions lead Barth and Brunner to characterise sin as "contradictory" and Barth to describe it as the "impossible possibility". We have seen throughout our analysis that the fact of these paradoxes is part of sin's meaning and as such is irrepressible. If we attempt to resolve the paradox in one direction or the other then it simply emerges elsewhere, and this other location may be less acceptable than the original paradox. So Barth correctly



sees sin as paradoxical, but emphasises the impossibility so much that the possibility is virtually lost, and the very reality of sin is the location of the paradox. Barth asserts so strongly that the events of Christian salvation occur to and not in human nature and history, that both his anthropology and his soteriology suffer as a consequence with human beings becoming passive objects in the process of redemption. Not only does Barth relocate the paradox but he sees it as contradiction.

We have seen the unacceptable results of this relocation of paradox in Barth's definition of the impossibility of sin. They can also be seen in Rahner's understanding of the possibility of rejecting God as a contradiction and in Pannenberg's assertion that the sinful human being is (as sinful) in conflict with actual reality. Rahner seeks to make sin "intelligible" and he does this by seeing it within a supralapsarian framework which, as for Barth, involves and depends upon an inadequate anthropology, because election and salvation precede the fall and Rahner thus takes insufficient account of human freedom. Although Rahner asserts a conflict within humanity between the two existentials of Adam and Christ, in soteriological terms the conflict is already resolved outside humanity and the paradox re-emerges in the possibility of rejecting God: even here the dialectic is very one-sided, it is an almost nominal possibility, an appendix. For Pannenberg the paradox of sin is that it is a mistaken view, in "contradiction" to reality, it is

limited to appearance not essence and thus exists within humanity only as a matter of wrong knowledge, not as a determination of human existence. These contradictory statements are unacceptable. They either evacuate sin of essential meaning or they result in confusion. An understanding of sin as a symbol, gathering up a whole system of interrelated meanings enables us to accept paradox as part of the system and as part of the symbol's reflection of human reality. The balance of the system relies not only on interaction between its elements but on tension between them and because this tension is part of the symmetry or "balance" of the whole it must be maintained. We must accept the paradoxes which are involved in sin's meaning. The presence of paradox is another way in which the symbol is self-limiting. That is, its collecting, simplifying function is limited at the point at which paradox - which is part of human experience - is reflected in the symbol. The process whereby human experience is symbolised as sin will not therefore lead us to logical consistency or rational clarity, nor should we expect it to do so. Such clarity and consistency would involve the loss of the symbolic representation of human reality. As Ricoeur says,

No great philosophy of the totality is capable of giving an account of the inclusion of the contingency of evil in a meaningful design - either the thought of necessity leaves contingency aside or so includes it that it entirely eliminates the 'leap' of evil which posits itself, and the 'tragic' of evil which always precedes itself; the tragic symbols speak of a 'mystery of iniquity' that man cannot entirely handle.(31)

So we must resist the impulse to simplify and clarify to the

point where the paradoxes which are part of human reality are no longer part of the meaning of sin.(32) Brunner manages to maintain the balance between accepting, and expounding the paradox. Despite his denial that sin can be "systematised" - a system being "a unity in itself without contradiction" - and despite his assertion that every attempt to systematise it transforms sin into a negative magnitude(33), Brunner maintains the paradox and his exploration of its nature and its relationships with other doctrines leads to a compelling view of sin which not only relates to human experience but also maintains the necessary symmetry with salvation. So, as we saw in Chapter 3, Brunner's thought about sin is more satisfactory than that of Barth for whom the paradox is largely resolved, in practice, by the general emphasis of his thought.(34) So although sin is paradoxical, it is not contradictory and it must be allowed its vital place within Christian theology.

Ricoeur pinpoints the connection between the mystery of sin and philosophical anthropology - a connection we have noted as lacking in Rahner and Pannenberg -

The initial pathos, reduced by transcendental reflection, is recovered in a theory of praxis and feeling. But the pre-understanding of pathos is inexhaustible. That is why philosophical anthropology is never completed. Above all it is never done with its task of recovering the irrationality of its non-philosophical source in the rigor of reflection. Its misfortune is not to be able to save both the depth of pathos and the coherence of logic.(35)

To repeat the quotation from Pascal which prefaces this thesis:

The knot of our condition takes its twists and turns in this abyss, so that man is more inconceivable without the mystery than this mystery is inconceivable to man.(36)

It seems therefore that we must adopt Niebuhr's view that "the paradox be accepted as a rational understanding of the limits of rationality and as an expression of faith that a rationally irresolvable contradiction may point to a truth which logic cannot contain"(37), within the kinds of limits which Ricoeur outlines.(38) We must maintain both sides of the paradox and explore their relationship in order to gain greater insight into the meaning of sin.

By way of conclusion I will suggest one particular element of sin's meaning which calls for greater exposition. This element is the relationship between sin and salvation. We have noted the unavoidable relationship between sin and salvation in the critiques in Chapters 3 and 4 and earlier in this chapter. However although humanity has been defined in the light of redemption (often in such a way that sin's meaning becomes limited or distorted), the implications of this relationship have much greater potential for contributing positively to our understanding of both sin and salvation than has been widely realised.

Both Ricoeur and Brunner see an understanding of redemption in Christ as the way forward in our exposition of the meaning of sin. Brunner denounces theoretical solutions to sin as false because they try to solve the problem by way of thought. The way forward is rather the recognition of the paradox as a reality which can only be eliminated by another reality.(39) He sees the theological means of coping with sin (as opposed to the philosophical way which is theodicy) as eschatology, as God's act of redemption where the reality of sin, the "contradiction", corresponds to the reality of the decision of faith, wherein the human being is severed from their sin.(40) We also noted Ricoeur's pointers towards Christology, and in particular the figure of the suffering servant, as possible answers to the problems of sin. He sees two options with regard to the element of the tragic within Christian thought: its consolidation within a logic of being, or its inversion in a Christology, the inclusion of suffering within divinity.(41) He suggests that to cope with the "mystery of iniquity which man cannot entirely handle" maybe we have to include the divine in the darkness, as the God of Job appears in the heart of the tempest.(42) Barth, despite the difficulties we have outlined in his thought, also says "It is here, where God himself has become man, that the deepest truth of human life is manifest: the total suffering which corresponds to total sin."(43) We have throughout our analysis noted the symmetry between sin and salvation and between inadequate understandings of sin and inadequate understandings of salvation. A contributing factor is the

emphasis on Christ as revealer, on the Incarnation itself as salvation, with a corresponding decrease in emphasis on Christ's sufferings, and the effects of this through the formulation of anthropology in terms of Christology. If our anthropology is to be based to some extent on our Christology, (and this is a major trend in contemporary systematic theology) then the inclusion of suffering within that Christology must relate to what we say about sin. The symmetry must also include the paradox of the servile will, of fate and freedom, maybe in the way Ricoeur suggests:

Whatever may be the meaning of this 'Suffering Servant', whether he be a historical personage, individual or collective, or the figure of a Savior to come, he reveals an entirely new possibility - that suffering gives itself a meaning, by voluntary consent, in the meaninglessness of scandal.(44)

Rahner talks of Christ's death as the reconciliation of the dialectic of activity and powerless suffering (cf. Chapter 4 p.165f). Brunner, again, affirms the inevitable connection between the Cross and the human situation, and the sense in which the Cross must happen(45).

This calls for a study of Christ's suffering in relation to sin. However we must note again our earlier conclusion of the danger of understanding sin from only one perspective. The suffering of Christ should not become the one perspective from which we understand sin, but it is a crucial perspective, particularly as a corrective, standing alongside those of creation, anthropology and human experience. So the tension

between creation and salvation is maintained, the archeological and teleological aspects of the symbol, in Ricoeur's language. The perspective of God's suffering in Christ does have a special place though, not as the chief or sole determination of sin, but as its solution, its counter-part, the place where the paradox is balanced by a corresponding paradox. Salvation, seen as involving the divine suffering, far from minimising sin's significance, thus emphasises it. We noted in various theologies the uneven relationship whereby salvation was stressed so much that sin came to be seen as mattering hardly at all. Our conclusion is that the relationship should be symmetrical so that the systematic as well as the existential significance of sin corresponds, as presupposition, to the scope of salvation: as sin abounds so grace abounds. So the paradox of sin is mirrored and balanced in the paradox of the Cross: sin as alienation from self, in freedom and necessity, alienation from God, alienation from humanity and the world - all these meanings are balanced and resolved in the paradox of God dying, of isolation within the Trinity, of the rejection of the Creator by the creature and of Christ's death as fate and freedom, victim and victor.(46) Our theology will thus be dominated not by sin but by salvation because sin is seen in the perspective of salvation which expands the context to include the resurrection and the still future nature of God's kingdom.

## CHAPTER SIX FOOTNOTES

1. Cf. Chapter 1 pp.13f. (cf c.FN4)
2. p.6. M.Stancliffe notes that by symbols we all make sense of a new experience, defining it in terms of something familiar, "Symbolism and Preaching", in Myth and Symbol, ed. F.W.Dillistone.
3. A.Vanneste, "Toward a Theology of Original Sin", p.212. Ramsey describes the fall as "a particular case in point" of the misunderstanding of religious language as if it worked "like ordinary matter-of-fact language", whereas in fact religious language, like scientific language, employs models as a means of being articulate about mystery. Religious Language, p.82. He talks about the various models used to describe God and argues that we should use as many models as possible and from these develop the most consistent religious discourse possible. "Talking about God", in Myth and Symbol.  
G.Daly applies Ramsey's description of this process specifically to the doctrine of original sin, looking at the "way we turn 'fiduciary' language into analytic language, seek to validate it on the empirical plane, and in consequence lose the sense of its isomorphic character." "Theological Models in the Doctrine of Original Sin". It is the relationship between the model and the reality which should be isomorphic, p.123. Daly's argument is that a number of different models are used in the concept of original sin, some of them (particularly the genetic) unnecessarily, and that these models need to be sorted out linguistically before we can reformulate original sin, where we see isomorphic language collapsing into the language of literal correspondence. He does note Ricoeur as providing an alternative model in his traditional interpretation of the fall, but does not note the clear connection with what Ricoeur says about original sin as a rationalisation of the Adamic myth (SE p.63). His argument for a number of models to contribute to a correct, "fiduciary" understanding dovetails into my argument for a broader understanding of sin.  
Cf. also the various understandings of symbol listed by Dillistone, "The Function of Symbols in Religious Experience", in Myth and Symbol.
4. SE p.239, cf. CI p.270.
5. H.R.Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.9.
6. Kelsey, The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology, p.28.
7. Cf. Perrin, Chapter 5 pp.273ff.



8. This is similar to Tillich's description of reconciliation as one of

a group of concepts which for two thousand years have successfully resisted all attempts at precise definition and systematic ordering. Salvation and regeneration, redemption and atonement, justification and sanctification belong to this group; and so does reconciliation. Each points to one total act by means of a different systematic material and with a different emphasis. The total act is the re-establishment of an original but disrupted unity...

"Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought", p.5.

9. Don Idhe explains how this reciprocity between the myths gives the Adamic myths secondary limits, with the second-degree avowal of evil as non-human, and that these limits save the Adamic myth from sterile moralism and condemnation of humanity. Hermeneutic Phenomenology.
10. "The Interpretation of a Biblical Symbol", p.366. This conclusion supports and begins to answer Williams' analysis of the problem of sin, "Sin and Evil" in Christian Theology. He isolates the rejection of the literal historical schema of creation and fall as one of the constituents of the problem, the others being the re-emergence of the gnostic identification of finitude and sin and of the inevitability-responsibility debate. Cf. Appendix A, p.344f. The direction in which Williams looks for a solution is an "Irenaeian" theodicy as seen in Schleiermacher. I have already indicated some of the problems in Schleiermacher's view (cf. Chapter Two, p.52ff), but I would also question whether the concreated imperfection and immaturity of humanity can really function as the antecedent evil which Williams sees as vital without thereby leading to the Manichean dualism he wants to avoid. In the ordaining of sin by God, for redemption, and in its "point of entry" in the human need for development, sin either becomes necessary or superficial. Either way, by using this schema to explain sin and to deal with the dilemma it seems that the "central intention of the doctrine - the self-imposed bondage of the will - is lost" in the face of the "virtually inescapable" nature of sin. If the Irenaeian theodicy does provide a way forward we must first have a basis for guarding against these consequences more specifically: the myths are iconoclastic towards each other, as well as influential.
11. Kelsey, "Human Being", in Christian Theology. The significance of the Christian "beginning mythology" is also noted by Eliade, who sees myth as necessary to

humanity and suggests some of the myths with which the Christian myth is currently replaced. "Myths, Dreams and Mysteries", Myth and Symbol, cf. I.P.Culianu, "Mircea Eliade at the Crossroads of Anthropology."

Humanity's "search for a usable past" is felt, from a very different perspective, by Letty Russell, and W.W.Berry, commenting on Russell, talks of the necessity for an integration of past, present and future in terms of human responsibility such as symbolized traditionally in the three-part drama of creation-fall-redemption. "Images of Sin and Salvation". The same sort of point is made by Richard Niebuhr when he declares that "the doctrine of sin is meaningful only as it presupposes the doctrine of creation and furnishes the presupposition of the doctrine of redemption." "Man as Sinner", p.280.

12. Cf. Chapter 4 pp.213ff, 219.
13. Cf. Chapter 5, pp.266.
14. Cf. Chapter 3 pp.127. and Chapter 4 pp.217 and 222.
15. CD II/2 p.417-8, cf. 422; Humanity of God, p.61f. Cf. also C.Brown, Karl Barth, p.136 and B.Milne's discussion of universalism in Barth, "The Idea of Sin in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth."
16. Van Leeuwen, The Surplus of Meaning, p.93.
17. S.Hiltner, "A Christian Understanding of Sin", says that sin "has worn thin through constant necessity until its meaning has been reduced to an immoral act", and he suggests a "broader" definition incorporating the three metaphors of rebellion, alienation and missing the mark; Richard Niebuhr argues against sin's reduction to moral categories, "Man as Sinner". A number of writers see an extension of sin's meaning as necessary to incorporate its collective or communitarian nature.  
On the need for a corporate understanding of sin cf. Schoonenberg's work (Appendix A. p.342f) H.Morris, "Shared Guilt"; J.Müller The Christian Doctrine of Sin, II, p.310ff; H.Rondet, Original Sin, p.214ff. Cf. also R.Trigg, "Sin and Guilt as Fate of Freedom", 3EC; H.Gorman, "Original Sin and Responsibility", 3EC; K.O'Shea, "The Reality of Sin"; H.Morris, "Shared Guilt". This is a particular emphasis in recent Catholic writing on sin.  
Other writers call for a concept of sin which will incorporate the usually alternative poles of Protestantism and Catholicism, classical and Christian anthropology, O.Piper, "Sin and Guilt" in Twentieth Century Theology in the Making, ed.J.Pelikan; Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, and sin as negative and positive. J.Macquarrie argues this from a theological perspective, In

Search of Humanity, and M. Midgley from a philosophical one, Wickedness. Another specific way in which sin is seen to be narrow a concept is in its "monolithic" interpretation as pride or self-assertion, J. Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace, and W. W. Berry, "Images of Sin and Salvation". This is seen as a particularly male understanding of sin and is linked to a critique of Niebuhr, among others.

18. Quell, in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Kittel, describes sin as a "theological" rather than a "religious" concept, meaning that it is a systematic theological clarification of religious processes whose content must therefore be derived from its immediate context. Scripture thus uses a variety of ways of expressing and using sin in its attempts to represent a religious phenomenon whose roots escape human understanding. He indicates the main Hebrew roots which have a range of meanings including the sense of missing the mark, a lasting state of guilt, freeing oneself from sin, rebellion as a volitional human action, bending and error, with an element of the irrational or tragic. Quell also notes a promiscuity in the use of sin and guilt with no sharp terminological distinction because there was never any doubt of the causal connection between abnormal action and abnormal state. He notes the absence of the usual terminology of sin in the fall story - unless the very general term for evil is included - but nonetheless links it to sin's meaning. He sees the fall aetiologically: the author's intention was not to give a correct theological account but to popularise a basic theological concept, it is not so much "theology" as true and profound piety speaking out of the compelling experience of inner tension. All of this is consonant with my interpretation and use of Ricoeur, as is his conclusion on the later, more developed Israelite concept of sin, by which

the simple man could not be told more simply or clearly what was the significance of the unrest of his heart in the presence of the holy than by such terms as transgression, deviation from a required norm, repudiation of every norm, or error which is to be corrected thereby. Criticism of human conduct, the assertion of guilty conduct and above all the inescapable knowledge of a demanding will of deity all meet in these pregnant concepts and give them the force of powerful formulae which exhaustively interpret the significance of all the situations of human destiny controlled by creaturely feeling. p. 276.

Sin has a similarly "all-embracing" nature in the New Testament as W. Gunther notes in the New International

Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed, C.Brown. The overall emphasis is that sin is seen in the context of the Christ-event, within two strands, the subjection of all people to the power of sin from which they are redeemed only through Christ, and the call for Christians to be servants of Christ not of sin. The different Biblical expressions, while not "completing" each other, are mutually illuminating and Berkouwer claims that "no one has ever defined our sin in a way that embraces the multiplicity of the Biblical expressions." Berkouwer, Sin, p.255f. Gelin and Deschampes, Sin in the Bible, similarly outline a broad range of meaning in their analysis of sin in the Bible. Deschampes gives a particularly inclusive range of the meanings of sin in the New Testament.

19. Cf. Chapter 5, pp.256.
20. Cf. Schoonenberg in particular, Man and Sin, cf. Appendix A.
21. Adriaanse sees the traditions of original sin as too deep to allow us to understand sin exclusively as deliberate and avoidable transgression, H.Adriaanse, "Original Sin and Responsibility", 3EC, p.128.  
We have already seen that R.R.Williams recognises the "tragic flaw" in human freedom, although he does not think this can be done in terms of the concept of sin itself, as I am suggesting, but thinks that evil must be dealt with as a distinct category apart from sin. R.R.Williams, "Sin and Evil", p.191f. Niebuhr and Schoonenberg also see the need for the paradox to be maintained, although it is questionable whether they succeed in doing so themselves. Cf. Appendix A pp.339f,342f. Vandervelde places Schoonenberg within a modern trend of situationalism which sees sin as historical, Rahner and Weger also being part of this trend, over against the opposite trend of personalism, seen in two other Catholic writers, Vanneste and Baumann. Although Vandervelde sees the two positions as philosophically and theologically incompatible, he claims that historical, trans-personal power and personal enslavement in sin can be seen as mutually inclusive if the historical power of sin is confessed from the immanent position of the actuality of personal sin, rather than being beheld from a transcendent speculative position: i.e. there should be both-and, not either-or. Original Sin. Two Major Trends. Cf. the criticisms of Niebuhr by J.Plaskow, Sin Sex and Grace, and Berry, "Images of Sin and Salvation".
22. We might add with Don Carson, concluding his study of the problem of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, that reductionism never eliminates the tension, it only changes its shape, Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility, p.220, and that "the...tension is not a

problem to be solved; rather it is a framework to be explored." p.2.

23. Further limits are suggested by Ricoeur, the value of which is supported by some of the criticisms above. These limits are that we should not speculate about original sin as if it had proper consistency, that we should not speculate about the evil which exists already (this is the ultimate mystery of sin), and that we should not speculate on evil at all without reference to the history of salvation. "Original Sin: A Study in Meaning", CI, p.286.

24. L. von Bertalanffy, General System Theory, p.37,89.

It is necessary (in biology, psychology and social sciences) to study not only parts and processes in isolation, but also to solve the decisive problems found in the organization and order unifying them, resulting from dynamic interaction of parts and making the behaviour of parts different when studied in isolation or within the whole.

p.30.

25. W.Buckley, Sociology and Modern Systems Theory p.5,9.

...a complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less stable way within any period of time...

and such that the whole is more than the sum of the parts, p.41.

26. Cf. Chapter 3 pp.118 and God and Man, p.63.

27. Bertalanffy, p.107.

28. *ibid*, Cf. Buckley, p.50ff, who notes that whereas closed systems increase in entropy and run down, open systems are negentropic, entropy decreases as the system reaches a higher level of complexity.

29. Dillistone, Myth and Symbol, p.106ff.

30. Buckley, p.50f, Bertalanffy, p.128ff.

31. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols" p.57, The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. Cf. also Berkouwer who talks of the enigma, inexplicability and fathomlessness of sin and notes the New Testament view of sin as "strange"; he warns against "integrating sin in a crystal-clear or rational mold. We

cannot give sense to the senseless." Sin, p.145ff.

32. Müller attempts to resolve the paradox in a mythology of the beginning, despite his own avowal of the necessity of the paradox and of meeting it with the "comprehension of incomprehensibility", The Christian Doctrine of Sin, II, pp.358ff, cf. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, Chapter 22. Cf. Appendix A.
33. God and Man p.63f.
34. Cf. Chapter 3 pp.117f.
35. "The Antimony of Human Reality", p.35, in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur.
36. Pascal, Pensées, 434.
37. The Nature and Destiny of Man, I, p.278.
38. Cf. Müller, II, p.108f, suggests that the most inadequate explanation of a contradiction may be better than an attempt to do away with the contradiction altogether.
39. Systematic Theology, II p.184.
40. Brunner, God and Man, p.64ff.
41. Chapter Five p.264.
42. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", in The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, p.56.
43. Dogmatics in Outline, p.106.
44. SE p.325.
45. Systematic Theology, II p.286f, 289ff.  
This emphasis is found also in the thought of Niebuhr,

The suffering of God is on the one hand the inevitable consequence of sin's rebellion against goodness; and on the other the voluntary acceptance by divine love of the consequence of sin.

The Nature and Destiny of Man, II p.57f, as also in that of Berdiaev,

It was not only the most just of men who was thus crucified, but also the Son of God. Unjust suffering is divine suffering. And unjust divine suffering brings about the expiation of all human suffering.

Spirit and Reality, p.98, quoted Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, p.43.

46. Cf. H.E.W.Turner, in his patristic study of the doctrine of redemption, notes the two themes, within the tradition, of Christ as Victor and as Victim, The Patristic Doctrine of Redemption, Mowbray, 1952, p.22f.  
Cf. also Ricoeur:

According to 'Christology', that suffering is a moment in divinity; that moment of abasement, of annihilation of the divine life, both completes and suppresses tragedy. Tragedy is consummated, for the evil is in God: 'Do you not know that the Son of Man must be delivered up?' That 'must' exalts fate and includes it in the divine life. But tragedy is suppressed because it is inverted... On the contrary, it is as an absolute Victim that the Christ of the Gospels is glorified - that is to say, elevated in being. The 'must', then, is unintelligible except in the light of the 'gift'. 'No one takes my life from me, but I give it of myself,' says Christ, according to John. That absolute Fate should also be absolute Gift - there is tragedy completed and suppressed.

SE p.328.

## Appendix A

### The structuring of sin: the monograph tradition.

The monograph tradition begins with Julius Müller (The Christian Doctrine of Sin, 2 vols., 1839, E.T. 1868), a prominent conservative German Protestant, influenced, as was Schleiermacher, by pietism but representative, according to Barth(1), of the unrest with which his generation took over the heritage of Schleiermacher. He opposed the Hegelianism of the Tübingen school, and Mackintosh places him as a leader of the "mediating" school.(2) Certainly Müller could not accept Schleiermacher's understanding of sin which he saw, like that of Augustine and Kant, as tending towards an unacceptable dualism, and as involving an unchristian optimism about humanity. Neither would Müller accept the opposite tendency towards a deterministic monism which he also saw as a threat to the Christian doctrine of sin. These particular concerns reflect Müller's isolation of the central problem of the doctrine as the tension between the inevitability of sin as inherited, and the essential nature of sin as individual free action. His position can certainly be described as mediating in that he tried to maintain inevitability and responsibility, as well as both the private and negative aspects of sin(3). This he did in his analysis of the doctrine which he deals with thematically, examining the historical material under the headings of "The Reality of Sin", its nature and imputation, "Principal Theories



explaining Sin", "The Possibility of Sin" and "The Spread of Sin". Having explored the hazards of defining sin as either negative or positive, as either inevitable or free, Müller declares that an inadequate explanation of a contradiction may be better than doing away with the contradiction altogether. However he is not content to stop at the point of understanding sin as an undeniable, contradictory and inexplicable reality, (a position which Barth notes would have been more satisfactory than, and would have marked Müller out from his contemporaries), but he goes beyond this understanding in a quest for intelligibility, the validity of which he himself has already questioned.(4) This quest leads him to the assertion of a Kantian-sounding individual, extra-temporal, spiritual decision for good or evil, which raises a number of problems, including some of those he himself has examined. Müller's analysis of the nature of the problem is thus more helpful than his own solution.

With F.R. Tennant's Sources of the Doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin (1903) we begin to see the impact of evolutionary theory on explanations of sin and the fall. Tennant, a liberal Anglican, represents the assimilation of evolutionary theory into Christian theology which corresponded, for him, with an optimistic estimate of humanity, although often this assimilation accompanied pessimism about the influence of the lower, animal nature of humanity. Tennant is significant as

an exception to the general liberal silence about sin, wanting to insist on the necessity of the sinner's responsibility, while also wanting his explanation to be considered respectable by the disciplines of logic, psychology, ethics and evolutionary science. In his work of 1903 he outlined the history of the doctrine in order to demonstrate that the Church fathers neither took over Jewish ideas of original sin, nor deduced the fall from Paul, but rather they derived their thought from other sources, particularly from contemporary speculation applied to current ideas. His conclusion is that the resulting view of hereditary sin, revealed by evolutionary theory to be unacceptable, need not be maintained, by Christians because it is not part of the original Christian message.

Seven years later James Orr's Sin as a Problem of Today (1910) expressed the conservative reaction against the inroads of evolutionary theory and particularly against Tennant's rejection of hereditary sin. Orr was concerned about the decline of the concept of sin due, he believed, to general emancipation from external authority, and changes in philosophy because of the influence of comparative religion. He was also concerned about evolutionary theory's supposed denial of transcendence and immanence. Accepting the ordinary categories of evolution, he held that Darwinism should be modified in line with Christian doctrine in an understanding of sin as an acquired category in human development. He was also critical of

pre-existent fall theories such as that of Müller.(5)

The Concept of Sin (1912), dubbed "the most elaborate of modern Pelagian treaties", (6) continued Tennant's argument in which he sought to defend the idea of sin by defining it in a very limited way, on the basis of empirical observation, and it takes the form of the failure to perform the necessary task of the moralisation of these impulses. Sin, Tennant explains, develops with humanity's growing moral awareness to which it is necessary. Tennant optimistically assumed that human reason was uncorrupted by sin.(7)

With the work of R.S. Moxon, a post-modernist Anglo-Catholic, the liberal and optimistic trend continued, seeing evolutionary theory as the key for interpreting original sin, and as thus enabling Christian theology to free itself, finally, from the harmful influence of Augustinianism. Moxon writes his history of sin, The Doctrine of Sin. A Critical and Historical Investigation into the Views of the Concept of Sin held in early Christian, Medieval and Modern Times, (1922), specifically from this standpoint. His survey is intended to show that Augustine's teaching, although seminally present throughout the preceeding centuries, is not to be identified with the vox totius Ecclesiae but is Augustine's own construction, albeit influenced by the general emphasis of

"Western" speculation. He admits the influence on Augustine of Origen, an Easterner, and his categorisation of Western and Eastern traditions involves a dubiously clear distinction between these traditions which do not fall as easily as he suggests into the categories of once- and twice-born. The point of his history is to question whether Pelagius is so erroneous or Augustine so orthodox as has been suggested. He sees evolution as the true key to the problem of evil (i.e. the problem of freedom and necessity), a key not available to Augustine:

On the thought of sin it was scarcely possible for Augustine to arrive at the truth by mere logic. He had not the facts of science before him.

Moxon examines modern theories influenced by the developing sciences of humanity, including those of Kant, Müller, Schleiermacher and Tennant, and although he is critical of them he claims that such application of modern research to the problem of sin has resulted undeniably in the discovery that evolution is the true key to the problem of evil, freedom and necessity. He goes on to define sin in psychological terms as the selfish use of "natural" instincts - a definition very similar to that of Tennant, including a characteristically liberal understanding of Christ's work as providing the world with a "will to serve", and with an example of sacrifice.(8).

N.P.Williams, also an anglo-Catholic, produced a more notorious work on sin, The Idea of the Fall and Original Sin

(1924) which stands within the same tradition of evolutionary, anti-Augustinian optimism. Like Moxon he claims that Augustine does not represent the vox totius Ecclesiae but only the "Western", "twice-born", "African" type of thought of which we see only traces in the pre-Augustinian tradition. Williams is championing the cause of the alternative, Eastern, once-born Hellenic type, free from the morbid attitude towards sex and the personal idiosyncracies exemplified in Augustine, Luther and Calvin.(9) This categorisation of once- and twice-born is the basis and the conclusion of Williams' outline of the historical development of the doctrine of sin. The once-born is supposedly revealed by Williams' history as the basic belief and he sums up the development of the nineteenth century as "away from Augustine and back to Origen".

Origen here represents the once-born, hellenic type of thought, despite Williams' own conclusion, earlier in the book, that we find in Origen's speculations, side by side, the dissecta membra of both the Hellenic and the African anthropologies. The critical point in the historical development, for Williams, is the enlightenment. He concludes from his analysis of enlightenment thought that:

The primitive, Hellenic, 'once-born' version of the Fall doctrine now stands clearly revealed as the basic or residual belief.(10)

While it may be possible to see the development of the doctrine of sin in terms of broad trends, this interpretation of

enlightenment thought, as the final return of the doctrine from the confusion and distortion of its erroneous Augustinian form to its normative and ecumenical once-born form, is highly misleading. It does justice neither to the complexity of the tradition, nor to enlightenment thought; neither does it allow for further, contrary development after Williams' own time. Williams too easily defines into starkly contrasted opposites a tradition which involves many different strands of thought.(11)

To deal with the problems which have stood in the way of this return to the correct Eastern view, Williams looks to psychology for something corresponding to "hereditary infirmity", and to evolutionary theory for the gradual development of moral self-consciousness. His solution to the determination-freedom debate is a single, collective fall of the race-soul or world-soul.(12) Recent work on sin is more disparate than the last few writers we have considered and has been less eager to abandon the Augustinian understanding of original sin in favour of evolutionary or psychological theories. This is due, in part, to reactions against the supposed optimism of liberalism and against the too hasty welcome of evolutionary theory as an answer to the key problems of theological anthropology. Recent dogmatic monographs on sin attempt to reinterpret, not to repudiate, original sin in the light of evolutionary theory (this is a particular concern of Catholic scholars) and there are frequent calls for new

understandings and re-assessment.

Reinhold Niebuhr is important as a key example of renewed interest in sin, also as the author of the impressive and influential two volume work, The Nature and Destiny of Man (1939). Niebuhr was a chief exponent and driving force of the trend of "American Realism"(13), rejecting any kind of optimism about the perfectibility of humanity and society. Influenced by Barth and especially Brunner, Niebuhr was critical of liberal theology in general and of metaphysical and purely academic theology, being very concerned with the practical application of theology to the ethical and social process. He saw the problems of ethics and morality as set by human nature and as thus requiring first of all an understanding of humanity and of sin. He was particularly interested in original sin as an idea which has potential to create the necessary attitude of vigorously contending for the right while admitting one's own self-interestedness; also as an idea which is psychologically true.(14) Niebuhr traces the history of Christian anthropology and, in this context, sin, and states the problem as a conflict between Christian and Classical, Protestant and Catholic, Renaissance and Reformation thought. He sees the way forward as involving a synthesis of these polarities and a reassessment, in particular, of the Augustine-Pelagius debate. His own conclusion, from an analysis of this debate, is the assertion that both necessity and freedom must be maintained as a

"dialectical truth":

It expresses a relation between fate and freedom which cannot be fully rationalized, unless the paradox be accepted as a rational understanding of the limits of rationality, and as an expression of faith that a rationally irresolvable contradiction may point to a truth which logic cannot contain.(15)

Niebuhr sees the paradox of freedom and finiteness as a basic constituent of human being, and as giving rise inevitably to anxiety which is the precondition of sin. He draws heavily on Kierkegaard's understanding of anxiety, although this anxiety is not to be identified with sin as such. Original sin is inferred from the universality of actual sin as its presupposition, it is a bias or defect in the will which, however, cannot be attributed to a taint in human nature (which would preclude freedom) because the will presupposes freedom.(16) Actual sin is, in its basic form, pride, the denial by human beings of their own finitude or, alternatively, the escape from the anxiety of the paradox into sensuality. Niebuhr's "realistic" and ethical approach is refreshing and important, and his analysis of sin as pride is excellent and particularly valuable in its inclusion of the individual and the collective aspects of sin. However it is questionable whether Niebuhr's explanation of sin, the way he defines it in practice, actually preserves this paradox, upon which he insists. He is criticised widely for relying too heavily on his understanding of sin as pride, at the cost of other types of sin.(17) There is also an emphasis on the inevitability of sin which leads to charges of fatalism, pessimism and monism. Niebuhr tries to protect the paradox by getting away from those historical-literalistic interpretations



of the fall which see original sin either as the total destruction of humanity's essence as the image of God or as the loss of something inessential to humanity. His own interpretation is an essentialist one, original righteousness being part of human essential, transcendent nature, outside but not prior to history, and therefore standing in judgement over the actions of humanity's sinful existence. Here it seems that the fall and humanity's responsibility and freedom are reduced to human beings' knowledge that what they do is wrong, knowledge which does not necessarily precede action. The essentialist definition of humanity as finite and anxious is linked so closely, as explanation, to the inevitability of sin that the eventness of the fall is lost, and with it the paradox of sin; love and justice become almost unattainable and anxiety almost incurable.(18)

In 1946 M. Thelen, in contrast with Williams' declaration of the movement from Augustine to Origen, described the current understanding of sin as a trend back to Augustinianism, in Man as Sinner in Contemporary American Realistic Theology. She couples Marx with Freud as the presiding genius at the birth of "realistic" theology, such as that of Niebuhr, reacting against the optimism of liberal ethics and the philosophy of religion and anthropology. She refers also to Richard Niebuhr, Horton, Calhoun and Bennett, charting further the increasing seriousness with which sin has been taken after the first third or so of

this century.

In the work of Piet Schoonenberg, Man and Sin (1965) we have an indication of Roman Catholic concern over sin and one of the ways of reinterpreting original sin in the light of evolutionary theory. It is amongst Catholic scholars that such reinterpretations have been most at issue, with the pressure to take account of contemporary theories of humanity and yet to conform to the Church's teaching. Schoonenberg is a representative of the "situationalist" interpretation of original sin, the other major trend being "personalism", typified in the work of Vanneste and Baumann.(19) Schoonenberg uses the concept of situation to traverse the chasm between the biblical idea of human solidarity in sin and the post-Tridentine understanding of sin as privation, with the privation of grace becoming a concrete situation of determination, through the free decisions and actions of others. The situation of privation, which began with the first Adam or Adams, leads to personal sins, which in turn contribute to a growing situation of original sin. Situation here includes bad example and pressure, the obscuration of values and norms and the lack of love which leads to the lack of integration of the human drives necessary for the realisation of human destiny in Christ. Schoonenberg's intention is to maintain the paradox of original sin which he interprets in terms of the dialectic of individualism and corporate personality. He, like Niebuhr, has something

important to say about the inexplicable relationship between the sin which is already there and the sin we choose to do. However he abstracts the two elements to such an extent that the emphasis falls on the externality of original sin as situation, and the internality of actual sin as free decision, so that it is not clear how the two elements can or should be integrated again; it is not clear how the situation is "inner" as Schoonenberg claims, nor how it is really rooted in the moral-religious realm, and thus called sin, even analogously. Since his abandonment of an explanation of the crucifixion as the fall (20) Schoonenberg has also failed to explain how this definition of sin relates to salvation.

Berkouwer's Sin (1971) represents a reaction against liberalism from a conservative, Calvinist standpoint. His work is intended as a restatement of the reformed view of sin understanding sin in terms of human corporeity and emphasizing sin's nature as senseless enigma, but not taking into account non-theological estimates of humanity.

J.L.Connor, "Original Sin: Contemporary Approaches", (1968), H.Rondet, Original Sin. The Patristic and Theological Background, (1972) and G.Vandervelde, Original Sin. Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Interpretation, (1981), are further representative of the Roman Catholic concern to take

account of the implications of evolution for sin. Connor looks at the questions of the Christological perspective on sin and its reformulation as "being-in-the-world". Rondet also notes the significance of Christocentrism which he understands as the attempt to integrate evolutionism into theology by uniting nature and grace in Christ. Vandervelde outlines the trends of personalism, seen in Baumann and Vanneste, and situationalism, seen in Rahner and Schoonenberg.

The tendency towards a Christological view of anthropology and sin is noted also by R.R.Williams, "Sin and Evil", and D.Kelsey, "Human Being", both in Christian Theology.(21) They put this tendency alongside the loss of the Adamic narrative and historical fall as decisive for contemporary theological understanding. Williams notes the relationship between fallibility and sin as a key issue. He isolates the rejection of the literal historical schema of creation and fall as one of the constituents of the problem, the others being the re-emergence of the gnostic identification of finitude and sin and of the inevitability-responsibility debate. The direction in which he looks for a solution is an Irenaean theodicy as seen in Schleiermacher. I have already indicated some of the problems in Schleiermacher's view (cf. Chapter Two, p.52ff), but I would also question whether the concreated imperfection and immaturity of humanity can really function as the antecedent evil which Williams sees as vital without thereby leading to the

Manichean dualism he wants to avoid. In the ordaining of sin by God, for redemption, and in its "point of entry" in the human need for development, sin either becomes necessary or superficial. Either way, by using this schema to explain sin and to deal with the dilemma it seems that the "central intention of the doctrine - the self-imposed bondage of the will - is lost" in the face of the "virtually inescapable" nature of sin. If the Irenaean theodicy does provide a way forward we must first have a basis for guarding against these consequences more specifically: the myths are iconoclastic towards each other, as well as influential. Kelsey, in his excellent and important essay, sees this situation within the context of the "turn to the subject" of enlightenment theology, which sees man's relationship to God as a mode of consciousness.(22)

# APPENDIX A FOOTNOTES

1. Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, SCM,1972.
2. H.R.Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology. p.138.
3. Müller was particularly concerned to refute the understanding of sin as privative, and as a matter solely of self-consciousness, which he saw to be expressed in Rothe's Theological Ethics.
4. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century, Ch.22. Cf. Müller, II, p.358ff, 147ff. Cf. also N.P.Williams, p.xxxiii, Moxon, p.184ff and Pannenberg, Theological Anthropology,p.129ff. Laidlaw was almost one of those contemporaries who, in 1879, gave some consideration to sin in the context of a concern with the doctrine of humanity. His emphasis was on sin as free choice not heredity.
5. R.Mackintosh is another example of conservative interest in sin and the effects on it of evolutionism, Christianity and Sin,1915. Also critical of Tennant, he held that Darwinism could well shed fresh light, but should not be seen as "supreme".
6. Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, I.p.262.
7. N.P.Williams notes our obligation to Tennant for proclaiming the "moral neutrality" of the appetite, "thereby sweeping away at one blow the endless confusions which clustered around the word 'concupiscence'". The Ideas of the Fall, p.535. Thelen notes Tennant as part of the "religious realism" or "philosophical theism" against which contemporary realists such as Niebuhr are reacting. Greeves criticises Tennant as atomistic, understanding "sin" on the basis of "a sin", and particularly opposed himself to Tennant's understanding of sin as ignorance, The Meaning of Sin, 1956. F.Greeves exemplifies a conservative reaction against liberalism. He follows the theme of ignorance, as part of sin's meaning and nature, through brief analysis of the development of the doctrine (particularly in recent thought), with particular emphasis on Tennant, for whom sin requires conscious knowledge, and against whom Greeves is reacting.
8. A more recent view similar to Moxon's, although not based on Moxon's belief in evolution as supplying the answers to the problem, is that of Richard Swinburne, who sees original sinfulness as a proneness to wrongdoing which

exists because of the genes giving rise to genetically inherited desires (desires for happiness, not for the bad, and not in themselves bad) which conflict with socially inherited moral beliefs and often also with the happiness of others. "Original Sinfulness", 1985.

9. G. Rupp notes that William's work on Luther is entirely based on Möhler's Symbolism, but that Williams makes inferences which Möhler was too careful to make, The Righteousness of God.
10. N.P.Williams, The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin, p.450.
11. Niebuhr also comments on Williams' "implausible thesis", N & D I.p.244 n3.
12. Cf. R.R.Williams, "Sin and Evil", p.188, notes that this is wholly speculative and that Williams has merely exchanged one myth for another. Rondet, Original Sin, p.245ff: "... however imaginative, Williams' theory is too far removed from Catholic dogma for constructive use by the latter."
13. Cf. M.Thelen, Man as Sinner in Contemporary American Realistic Theology; Horton & van Dusen, "A Study of Reinhold Niebuhr" in G.Hammar ed., Christian Realism in Contemporary American Theology, pp.167-253.
14. M.Thelen, p.111f.
15. N & D I, p.278.
16. op.cit., p.257.
17. Niebuhr is generally criticised for concentrating too much on his definition of sin as pride, understating the alternative he suggests of sensuality, or indeed, any other interpretations. Cf. Milne, The Idea of Sin in the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth; Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace; J.C.Berry, "Images of Sin and Salvation in Feminist Theology"; J.C.Raines, "Sin as Pride and Sin as Sloth".
18. Cf. B.Milne, op.cit., p.388f, criticises Niebuhr as too pessimistic, and almost monistic. Vlastos also makes this criticism, "Sin and Anxiety in Niebuhr". Thelen notes that for realistic theologians in general, that humanity is a sinner has come to mean that human beings cannot attain perfection within history, and that Jesus' perfectionist ethics may need to be abandoned.
19. Cf. Vandervelde, Two Major Trends, notes that the personalistic approach leads to a question about the

universality of sin, with its emphasis on sin as only individual free action and that both Vannest and Baumann in response to this difficulty become almost fatalistic in their explanation of sin, which would indicate the failure of a purely personalist definition of sin.

20. Schoonenberg is influenced by Teilhard de Chardin in his evolutionary understanding of the developing history of sin, which parallels the developing history of salvation. At one point he maintained that this history of sin climaxed in the crucifixion which was the real fall, leading to a situation of gracelessness. He has now virtually abandoned this idea.
21. Ed. P.Hodgson and R.King.
22. R.Trigg and R.S.Anderson also comment on the significance of subjectivism for the doctrine of sin. R.Trigg, "Sin and Guilt as Fate of Freedom", notes that the contemporary emphases on subjectivity and consciousness often produce the same conclusions as those of Kant and Kierkegaard in seeing evil as "the shadow cast by freedom" because of their extolling of human freedom and autonomy. R.S.Anderson On Being Human. Essays in Theological Anthropology, notes the "general abandonment of ontology as a basis for determining the nature of human personhood in favour of a more phenomenological approach, based on either existentialist or rationalist interpretations of human existence." p.5.



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